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AN IMMIGRANT'S  
AMERICAN ODYSSEY



Ernst Skarstedt

# An Immigrant's American Odyssey

## A Biography of ERNST SKARSTEDT

By Emory Lindquist

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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
DR. MARCUS SKARSTEDT

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## PREFACE

In the annals of Swedish emigration to America, Ernst Skarstedt is generally recognized as a distinguished editor and author. His many books, essays, articles, and poems made him a great influence in Swedish American culture for five decades. His editorial responsibilities with Swedish-language newspapers in Chicago, San Francisco, and New York, as well as his free-lance writing, provided a fine forum for expressing his ideas and established him as a pre-eminent journalist.

Towering above this mass of published material is the man himself—sailor, vagabond, farmer, musician, poet, photographer, nature lover, champion of freedom for the human spirit. He was a restless person, agonizing over the fate of mankind; a rebel, full of protest; an enigma, unable to come to terms with himself; and a man seeking answers to questions for which there seemed to be no answers. Ernst Skarstedt's individualism and eccentricity produced responses to life that made him interesting and controversial. These qualities and others fashioned his career and destiny.

Ernst Skarstedt, who grew up in the home of a distinguished professor of theology at Lund University, spurned an academic career and, after a brief experience as a seaman, followed his cherished goal of becoming a pioneer in the American West. Although he lived close to nature as a farmer in Kansas, Washington, and California during various periods, economic circumstances dictated that he abandon again and again the peace and solitude of life in rural areas for a career as a journalist in the city, an assignment he always viewed as temporary.

The hostility of Ernst Skarstedt to the institutional church and to sophisticated standards of social custom and propriety was the result of his forthrightness and hatred of sham and hypocrisy. His condemnation of socialism, communism, and the prohibition movement are clearly identified with his repudiation of everything that encroached upon his most cherished goal—freedom. His opposition



to racism and his early support of women's rights are examples of his respect for personality. He had tolerance for diversity of ideas and opinions, but no tolerance for humbug, sham, conformity, and class consciousness.

Ernst Skarstedt was honest but impatient. He had a deep strain of melancholy which at times drove him to the point of desperation. But he found enjoyment in nature, in books, in music, in drinking with friends, and in his family. He accounted himself a failure. Moreover, he regretted that the vagabond quality of his life created hardships for his family.

The "mania for keeping records," to use Ernst Skarstedt's own words, wins the praise of a biographer. He was virtually a slave to his diary which he maintained unfailingly in the Swedish language from youthful years until a few months prior to his death. Moreover, he kept a journal which provides extensive material about his many activities. His books, articles, poems, and letters enrich the resources for the study of his life.

The quest in biography is for information and understanding. According to Dumas Malone, "What the historically-minded biographer tries to do is to live with his subject in spirit long enough and intimately enough to form definite impressions of his character and personality." This is a challenging but not always an achievable goal because the intimate qualities of life are not always fully grasped. In any event, this study has produced impressions of character and personality that are intriguing but, at times, frustrating. Ernst Skarstedt was an extraordinary person. Life was for him an interesting puzzlement, which at times fascinated him, but whose meaning seemed to elude him. Perhaps there is something of Ernst Skarstedt in each one of us.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# I

## THE EARLY YEARS

The genealogy of Ernst Skarstedt on his father's side can be traced only as far back as the eighteenth century to two brothers, Johan and Axel Skarstedt, natives of Skara, Sweden. The family name was taken apparently from Skara, the cathedral city of Västergötland. Johan, who was a merchant in Vänersborg and later in Uddevala, was married to Fredrika Charlotta von Bröcker. The husband died in 1808 and his wife died nine years later. Abraham, their youngest son, who was born in 1791, was married to Christina Ljungqvist. Abraham, Ernst Skarstedt's grandfather, was the chief mate on Swedish sailing ships. He died from yellow fever in Havana, Cuba, in 1820, at the age of twenty-nine. The Abraham Skarstedt's had one son, Carl Wilhelm, born in 1815, and destined to become a famous professor of theology at Lund University.<sup>1</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's ancestry on his mother's side is traced directly to Peter Wieselgren who was born in 1800, the second son of Jonas Jonsson and Elin Ingemarsdotter. Peter chose the name Wieselgren because the family had connections with the Wiesel family of Vislanda in Småland. The Wieselgren family traced its antecedents to Simon i Ryd who lived in Västra Torsås, Småland, during the latter part of the seventeenth century, and who was married to Ingegerd Månsdotter. Peter Wieselgren married Mathilda Catharina Rosenquist in 1833. Hedvig Elina, the fourth Wieselgren child, who was Ernst Skarstedt's mother, was born in 1839. Pastor C. W. Skarstedt and

Hedvig Elina Wieselgren were married at Göteborg in 1856. Dr. Peter Wieselgren, Ernst's grandfather, was a famous theologian, author, evangelical churchman, and leader of the Swedish national movement against the use of alcohol.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after the Reverend C. W. Skarstedt and Hedvig Elina Wieselgren were married in 1856, the couple began life at Solberga in Bohuslän, where the husband was *kyrkoherde* (rector) for Solberga, Jörlanda, and Håлта congregations. When C. W. Skarstedt proposed to Hedvig Wieselgren in September 1854, he had prepared a closely-written, eight-page document in which he professed great love for the attractive prospective bride and great hopes for the future. Hedvig replied in the affirmative in a cordial letter of eight sentences. The groom was forty-one and the bride was seventeen at the time of their marriage.

Solberga was an isolated area ten miles northwest of the medieval city of Kungälv and twenty-five miles distant from Göteborg. No railroad communication had yet reached the Solberga and Kungälv area when the Skarstedts arrived there in 1856. The region was not heavily wooded although groves of pine and spruce, together with clumps of birch trees, produced variety in the rather rugged landscape from which loomed huge outcroppings of gray rock ledges. The terrain around Solberga evens out somewhat gradually from the rough coastline of Hakeford only a few miles to the west, which in turn, becomes a part of the Skagerack and eventually the North Sea. The terrain contributed undoubtedly to the absence of dense forests, but the long tradition of grazing flocks of sheep had been a decisive factor in the destruction of plants and the sprouts of trees. The lack of extensive tillable land made raising sheep almost inevitable although rye, oats, and other crops were grown in modest amounts. Moreover, Solberga residents supplemented the daily larder by fishing in nearby lakes or on more distant voyages to the North Sea, and by hunting wild game.

The Skarstedts lived in the Solberga *prästgård* (parsonage), which was located on a hill approximately one mile from Solberga church and village. Only the spire of Solberga church can be seen from the *prästgård*, separated as it is by a high ridge of gray rock. The house was a large, two-story, wooden structure with a thatched roof. It was in this house that Ernst Teofil Skarstedt was born April



14, 1857. The Reverend Skarstedt's *Annotationsbok* (notebook) records that on April 18, he paid thirty-six *riksmynt* (currency) for the services of two midwives, Mamsell Schinkler, from Ucklum and Fru Bengtsson, from Göteborg, who were present at Ernst's birth.

When Ernst was brought to Solberga church for baptism, according to the rites of the State Church of Sweden shortly after his birth, this important ceremony was performed at the baptismal font that had been in the church since the twelfth century. Near the front of the church was a model of a ship which had been placed there in the 1820s by a grateful Solberga seaman whose life had been miraculously saved in a shipwreck that claimed the lives of most of his companions. The altar before which Ernst's father performed the liturgy of the service had been built in the seventeenth century, the same century which had provided the pulpit from which his father preached with such excellence and humor that his reputation spread from the isolated parish in Bohuslän to a wide area. The parishioners respected *Kyrkoherde* Carl Wilhelm Skarstedt although he told them that "*Min sol skall inte bärgas in Solberga,*" (My sun shall not set in Solberga) which is not quite so pointed as the original, which links, "*sol*" (sun) with the "*Sol*" in Solberga, the name of the parish, and "*bärga,*" which means "to go down."

Ernst early showed unusual talent, which a proud and grateful mother commented upon in her letters. In January 1859, Hedvig Skarstedt wrote from Solberga to her brother Harald Wieselgren: "We now have another new room upstairs. It is a children's room. These rooms are so pleasant and high. You should see how Ernst can run and play and enjoy himself. I constantly live in the happy hope that he shall be such a joyous child as you were. He can say '*momo*' and '*moffa*' instead of '*mormor*' (grandmother) and '*morfar*' (grandfather), and he is trying now to say '*morbror*' (uncle)." In February she recorded in her diary that "when the door rattled, Ernst cried out, '*pappa*' and when no one was there he was so sad." In April, she wrote about him before he had reached his second birthday: "Ernst is beginning to speak several words and I hope he will soon learn how to express himself like a little man. He can already say several English words." As spring days arrived, mother and son were out-of-doors and she wrote early in May: "Saturday Ernst walked with me almost to the country road and pulled his little

wagon. He looked so unbelievably sweet!" But there were some normal problems as recorded three days later: "In the evening Ernst pulled Conrad in his little wagon which was so sweet to see. When Ernst could not pull Conrad longer, he became so angry that I had to spank him, poor child. I hope it will be good for him." There were happy days, when little Ernst hid from his mother who joined in the fun of trying to find him, and when he called her "*Fru mamma*," after hearing a household worker call her "*Fru*," but there were some anxious moments, too, when Ernst's little hand was squeezed in a dresser drawer or when an eye became red and sore. In October, Hedvig Elina was especially pleased because Ernst was enthusiastically riding his hobby horse, which was a good replica of a small horse.<sup>3</sup>

There was a feeling of great expectation but also of uncertainty during much of 1859 when the Reverend C. W. Skarstedt was being considered for an important theological position at Lund University. He had served as a *docent* (assistant professor) in theology at Lund from 1848-1856. In March 1859, Mrs. Skarstedt wrote to her friend Mary Lindberg that "Soon it will be decided. I wonder how it will turn out. Oh, if we could go there that would be wonderful." In November, good news reached the Solberga *prästgård*. A message came at midnight in a telegram sent to Göteborg from Lund stating that C. W. Skarstedt had been elected as an *adjunkt* (associate professor) in theology at Lund. There was, however, profound regret among the parishioners. A few days later Mrs. Skarstedt wrote to her friend Mary: "All day long a long stream of people have been here. They cry and in other ways express their sorrow."<sup>4</sup>

Although there was rejoicing about the call to Lund, there was great anxiety at the same time within the Skarstedt family circle. The situation is described in detail by Hedvig on November 13:

Ernst began to cough and become feverish. His condition worsened so that he could hardly breathe . . . I prayed to God that He would help if this was His will. We were afraid that Ernst would not live until Carl came home. A messenger was sent immediately to the doctor, but he did not come. I found a remedy for the throat infection in Rosenstein and with Jesus' help we succeeded in making Ernst vomit.<sup>5</sup> He began to improve. When Carl returned the worst was over.

The distraught but grateful mother reported that Doctor Ullman came the next day and gave Ernst some medicine. For the

next several days, Ernst was given *kräkvin* (wine for vomiting) from which he became very weak. The mother observed: "Ernst is so good as he lies so patiently for three days in his bed without asking to get up. He continued to improve and in a week, the crisis was over." There were busy days in the Skarstedt household as the family made preparations for leaving Solberga for Lund. On November 30, Hedvig wrote in her diary: "Finished packing and left for Lund. Many farmers stood crying by the edge of the road as we drove away. It was so hard to leave."<sup>6</sup>

An interesting insight into the attitude and spirit of Ernst's mother is found in her response to moving to Lund, and in it is revealed a quality that is quite characteristic of her son Ernst. In contemplating the differences in life between an isolated rural parish and a famous university city, she wrote: "I at least plan to live there as I have lived here within the small world of my own family, since I think that is the most pleasant way to live, especially if one also has a few close friends to be associated with, who cast their bright sunshine around us. I am not interested in entering Lund's social world."<sup>7</sup>

Ernst was not yet three years old when his parents and the rest of the family moved from Solberga in Bohuslän, to Lund in Skåne, a productive area of southern Sweden, where they first took up residence on Fiskaregatan in that old and famous university town. A dark cloud of sadness settled over the household in December 1863, when following an illness of several months, Mrs. Skarstedt died. Ernst recorded his feeling on that day, December 28, as he later recalled: "Mamma died. I was terribly scared of her corpse. I cried when Papa brought me there. During Mamma's illness, I sat with her and read. *Farbror* Anderson, a teacher in the school and former *rektor* (principal), was here when she died. We sat in the children's room. Mamma lay in the front room. Papa and *Farbror* Anderson came in crying." Ernst, at six, was the oldest of the children. His two brothers were Conrad, four, and Waldemar, two.<sup>8</sup>

Ernst's father, in 1864, married Ida Pauline Westdahl, the daughter of *Prosten* (rural dean) and *Fru* Carl Westdahl. Ernst recorded the following note in his diary describing the event: "Was this summer with Papa at Karlshamn where on August 12, he was married to Ida Pauline Westdahl. When we traveled there, we went by

train to Christianstad; from there at 10 in the evening by coach to Karlshamn, where we arrived at 6 o'clock in the morning." The father of Ernst's stepmother was a minister of the gospel, further increasing the circle of theologians in the Skarstedt family. Later, in an autobiographical article, Ernst pointed out that his father, a grandfather, and six other men in his family were clergymen. It was small wonder, he wrote, since he had learned to read at the age of four, that three years later he preached sermons energetically from chairs and tables for his brothers, other members of the family, and anyone else who would listen.<sup>9</sup>

The year 1865 witnessed two important and different developments in the Skarstedt family. On June 20, Hergeir Engelbredt was born, the first child in the second marriage. Five more Skarstedt children were born, making a total of nine children. On November 28, Ernst reported: "Today Papa became professor. The students sang outside our house, 30 Bytaregatan."<sup>10</sup>

Ernst and his brothers, Waldemar and Conrad, shared many experiences together. They chose special names for each other. Ernst was "Ess," Conrad was known as "Cocca," and Waldemar became "Lalla," a name that stayed with him for many years. Although the Skarstedt children grew up under fairly austere restrictions, there is also evidence that Ernst shared in many of the normal experiences of children everywhere. Shortly after Christmas, 1867, Ernst, then ten years old, wrote a letter of thanks to Grandfather Peter Wieselgren in Göteborg, for Christmas presents, and in that letter he indicated some of the things that interested him.

Thank you for the Christmas presents which we received from Grandfather. Does Grandfather know that Ernst received 29 Christmas presents, Conrad 24, and Waldemar 18? Does Grandfather know that it is so terribly cold here that we freeze very much and that we have very much snow here and that Ernst has a sore foot so that Ernst cannot go out and hasn't been outside for a long time but is inside? And that Ernst received as a Christmas present from Papa printing equipment so Ernst can really print . . . And does Grandfather know that in September Ernst received two tame rabbits, and that one died when Ernst had it two weeks and that the other one ran away from Ernst last month and Ernst never got it back again?<sup>11</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt had excellent opportunities for an education. Early instruction took place in the home and with private tutors. In

January 1866, he enrolled in the Cathedral School. He walked each day through the narrow cobble-stone streets of historic and beautiful Lund to the school which had been located since 1837 at the corner of Stora Södergatan and Svanegatan. The plain but attractively designed two-story stone structure provided fine facilities for instruction. The building in 1716-1718 had been the headquarters for King Charles XII. Ernst and his friends could readily reconstruct the atmosphere of the royal court with attendants as they played games in the charming setting of the school.<sup>12</sup>

Ernst was no ordinary boy. He has described his early years:

Ever since childhood my thoughts have gone obviously in another direction from those of my schoolmates. When they played, or frolicked, or threw snowballs, or fought, I sat by myself in some remote, hidden corner and read about plants or animals or foreign countries, or strolled alone around the countryside or in parks, imagining myself living on some distant, unknown coast, where I could examine new conditions, new plant life, and new animals. The older I grew, the more deeply rooted became this peculiar manner of thinking, this longing for something new, adventuresome, and unknown, all the more after I began to read accounts and travel descriptions about foreign countries.<sup>13</sup>

A restless spirit in young Ernst caused him to dream of a faraway and beautiful land where he could "like Robinson Crusoe live a simple, innocent life in nature, unaffected by civilization." Evidence of his urge is found in the description written by him dated August 13, 1871, on the title-page of his detested school textbook, *History of the Middle Ages*, by Jakob Ekelund. There the fourteen-year-old dreamer copied four lines from the verses of *Talis Qualis*, the pseudonym of Carl Vilhelm August Strandberg (1818-1877), who was the intellectual leader of the liberal Lund University students in that era. These lines copied by Ernst describe Strandberg's and Ernst's burning desire, "to experience life on the surging sea, on the smiling, green-covered, flowering island, where there would be quiet and dreams, and finally death."<sup>14</sup>

The first decade of Ernst's formal education included the study of Christianity and Swedish language and literature during every term. The distribution of other subjects was as follows: German and Latin, eight years; Greek, six years; French, five years; Hebrew, philosophy, and English, two years; mathematics, science, history,

and geography, nine years. The instruction in 1865 was private. In the period from 1866 until 1875, when Ernst went to sea, he was a member of classes that ranged in size from fifteen to fifty-seven. The classroom performance during this period showed greatest achievement in Swedish, German, and Greek. The normal class time, Monday through Saturday, was 7:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M., 10:00 A.M. to noon, and 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. with occasional time off in the afternoons. Devotional services were held each day at 6:30 A.M. in the spring and autumn terms and at 6:45 A.M. in the winter term. The above schedule did not include instruction which he received in gymnastics, fencing, music, or military training.<sup>15</sup>

Ernst's studies at the Cathedral School were not characterized by distinctive academic achievement, a pattern that was to prevail in his later years of formal education. Ernst has described himself as never being a "work horse" when it came to his studies. One bright feature was his talent and interest in music. He began to take lessons in piano when he was ten years old. Mamsell Åkerström was his teacher for a considerable period of time. One day in 1872, Ernst had been delighted when his father gave him twenty-five öre because he practiced his piano lesson for twelve hours.

In October 1873, he received his first violin and bow for which his father paid 8.50 kronor. His formal instruction in violin was rather limited until he returned in 1875 from his voyage to the White Sea. The young student joined the school's vocal organizations at an early age, singing tenor until 1874, when he could reach a "D," and then he became a bass. The uncertain course of life was impressed upon him in 1874, when he had the sad mission of singing in a boy's quartet at the funeral of Anders Nilsson, a close school friend. Ernst's stepmother had great interest and considerable talent in music. She encouraged Ernst's development in that area. Performing and listening to music proved to be an important resource for Ernst across the years.<sup>16</sup>

The early years of Ernst Skarstedt included much more than formal studies in school, lessons in music, and instruction in religion. He had the pleasure of studying nature in the company of Josua Lindahl, then a student at Lund University. Lindahl later became a professor at Augustana College, Rock Island, and subsequently state geologist of Illinois. The contact with Lindahl stimulated Ernst's

interests in botany, geology, and zoology. In June 1868, the young student accompanied the Lund scientist on a long excursion into various parts of Skåne where he learned about plants, flowers, and trees. He learned also about the age of the earth and the geological history of man's habitation. These field trips with Lindahl broke the monotony of classroom exercises which were especially tedious for a boy of Ernst's temperament. Josua Lindahl, in 1878, emigrated to the United States, where Ernst had many associations with him across the years, as well as extensive correspondence.<sup>17</sup>

One day in April 1869, Johan Nilsson, Anders Beckman, Conrad, and Ernst were in the country with their bows and arrows. After much aiming at targets, furnished by the native surroundings, the quietness of the place was interrupted when Conrad cried out. Ernst writes: "I ran over to see what it was and I found that Johan had shot an arrow deep in Conrad's leg. We pulled it out. I got scared and jumped behind a wall so that the same thing would not happen to me. Then I heard Beckman cry out. I ran over there and I found that Johan had shot him in the head. Blood flowed."<sup>18</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt had great interest in nature and animal life. Between June 4 and September 14, 1869, he bought five dogs. In August, he acquired three squirrels. He prepared a catalog in 1871 of the specimens which he had collected during 1870, and to his pleasure the total was 292. Included were various types of birds, snails, amphibians in alcohol, mounted animals, and shells among other things. He kept doves and rabbits in large numbers. His interest in classifying plants and animals was an active one. He prepared and seeded an attractive garden patch. He loved to roam in the woods and to work in the soil. When winter came, Ernst and his friends were exhilarated by the fun that the heavy snows provided. Scooting down *Sliparebacken*, a mound dating from the Bronze Age, was especially delightful.<sup>19</sup>

On June 25, 1872, Carl Olsson, Conrad, and Ernst started on a walking trip to Småland that lasted more than two weeks. This was the season of the delicious *smultron* (wild strawberries) and, as the boys walked, they shared enthusiastically in nature's bounty. On June 28, Ernst recorded in detail, as became his custom, that at one place he ate 480 *smultron* and a few hours later he consumed 503. Later he found a luscious blueberry bush from which he picked and



ate 159 berries. Early in July the hikers came to Spånhult, their destination, and the parental home of Grandfather Peter Wieselgren. Ernst has described the occasion in his diary: "July 2. We arrived at Spånhult where Grandfather's brother, Johannes Jonasson lived. When he found out who we were he cried with joy . . . We were served coffee, large *smörgåsar* [open-faced sandwiches], *smultron*, of which I ate 250, ham, and we would also have had *gröt* [porridge] if we had been able to eat more. Later Johannes showed us our grandfather's first pulpit, a large stone surrounded by Linden trees, on which Grandfather stood and preached for a flock of sheep." The next day the three boys were served coffee in bed, in keeping with a Swedish custom which shows great respect for guests. They then had breakfast when the boys ate *smörgåsar*, ham, and *smultron*. Ernst reported that he ate 300 *smultron* at that time. When on July 4, Ernst, his brother Conrad, and their friend, Carl Olsson, met his grandfather's sister, Hildegard, she was weaving carpets. Her son, Gustaf, took the boys to Blädinge, Ernst observing that it had been necessary to open and close eighteen gates along the roads. The journey was concluded, before returning on the train to Lund, by a trip to Växjö where they visited the cathedral, Småland's museum, and other places of interest.<sup>20</sup>

Ernst experienced times of dismay and anguish within the family circle. One problem that occurred in March 1872, was described as follows: "When I came home at four o'clock August Liborius' stepmother stood there jabbering about how I had whipped her son. I got twenty to thirty fisticuffs from Papa in the presence of the woman. Papa came up to my room later and said it seemed as if the devil had come into me . . . I almost ran away in my despair, unhappy me." The bad feeling between father and son continued in the succeeding days because it was a week later that Ernst wrote in his diary: "Papa talked to me today for the first time." Ernst contributed to the course of events. At one time he wrote: "I threw seven stones at Gullberg's door [a roomer in the Skarstedt household]. Erik came down with a message from Gullberg that we [Eckhard, Bergendoff and Ernst] should come up. Gullberg took us to his room where both of us got our ears pulled five or six times, whereupon he drove us out . . . Mamma later held a terribly condemnatory sermon for us, called us 'heathen' and if she ever sees

that 'terrible Eckhard' again, she will drive him out of the house although I certainly do not know what he has done." When one afternoon in December of 1872, Ernst and his friends were too noisy in his room, Ernst's father provided punishment by prohibiting Ernst from spending any time in his room upstairs except for sleeping at night. This punishment was soon rescinded because his parents found it troublesome to have him downstairs.<sup>21</sup>

Criticism of Ernst's manner of dressing came early in life. What loomed rather large for a sixteen-year-old boy is described in his diary in September 1873:

Sunday. I wore my black clothes today. Was at the morning church service. Partly because I had a headache, partly because it was cold, partly because I was not accustomed to wearing black clothes, I wore my overcoat in church. When we were eating lunch, Mamma bawled me out and said, "You have very *poor character* and do not want to be neat a single time." Moreover, she continued haughtily that I was the only boy who wore an overcoat in church. I tried to protest that five boys in my class wore overcoats. All of a sudden Papa boxed my ear. I was ordered from the table.<sup>22</sup>

Instruction for boys and girls in Martin Luther's *Catechism* and the Holy Scriptures under the auspices of the Church of Sweden was normal for young Swedes. Ernst was involved in that formal and sustained effort between September 1872, and April 1873. He participated in the rite of confirmation on April 4, 1873. He was one of eighty-eight young people who stood for three and one-half hours during the festive service in the Lund Cathedral. Two days later he received communion for the first time.<sup>23</sup>

The great twin-spired Romanesque Cathedral which traced its origin to the first structure built by Knut the Holy, then king of Denmark, in the 1080s, had many attractive features for Ernst. The fourteenth century clock, the *Horologium mirabile Lundense*, still an attraction for visitors to Lund, was fascinating as at the appointed time he watched the two heralds with trumpets appear while the organ played "*In dulci jubilo*," whereupon a small door opened, and the Three Kings marched out. When they came in front of the Virgin Mary and the Christ child, the Kings bowed and departed through another door. Ernst also made visits to the spacious crypt, where the tombs of famous clergymen and laymen were found. As a choir boy, he sat in the intricately carved choir stalls that dated from the

fourteenth century. Young Ernst Skarstedt heard sermons in Lund Cathedral by Johan Henrik Hägglund, Albert Lundgren, C. O. Rosenius, the famous evangelical layman, his father, and others.

Although 1874 was not especially noteworthy in the life of Ernst Skarstedt, his diary recounts some interesting developments. A very important notation was made on January 2: "I decided today that I will become a seaman." The diary indicates frequent references to the fact that he was smoking. In August, he wrote: "Last Sunday Thilda [a housekeeper] came in just as I was smoking. I hid the cigar. She said: 'I think you have been sitting and smoking. Oh, I wonder if you will get mad that I saw you smoking. What difference does that make?' " Later that month he smoked a cigarette and half a cigar and he didn't get dizzy any more. In September, he smoked his clay pipe for the twelfth time.<sup>24</sup>

Ernst was neither social nor anti-social as far as girls were concerned. It appears, however, that he was greatly attracted to Gerda Brunnström although his diary is not very informative including only such observations as that in September, "I met Gerda Brunnström for the first time since I came to Lund from Stehag." In October 1874, he was present at a gala party at the home of *Lektor* (schoolmaster) Petersson where twenty girls and boys had been invited. Although almost all the young people danced, Ernst reported that he did not participate. He shared enthusiastically in the punch, fruit, beef steak, and other delicacies which were served. His principal entry about the party was the following: "I didn't greet the girls when I arrived nor did I do so later." It is interesting to observe that early next year he reminded himself in the diary, "It is now several months since I have seen Gerda Brunnström."<sup>25</sup>

In January 1875 certain names—Carl Lagerholm, Carl Anderberg, Carl Andersson, Jöns Svensson, and Peter Malm—appear with unfailing regularity in Ernst's diary: "January 15. Went walking with Carl Lagerholm and other seamen. Wore seaman Carl Andersson's red pull-over. January 16. Went walking with Carl Lagerholm and Carl Anderberg. Drank beer with Carl Anderberg and another sixteen-year-old seaman, Jöns Svensson." These contacts with the young seamen furnished the background for the following entry in February: "Was with Carl Lagerholm and Carl Anderberg. This evening I was with Mamma for one hour and fifteen minutes until

almost ten o'clock. I convinced her to persuade Papa to permit me to go to sea this summer which she did when Papa came in. He did not seem to be so terribly against it."<sup>26</sup>

Ernst's diary indicates that his interest in becoming a seaman had been a topic of family discussion and concern for some time. In February 1871 he wrote the following: "For dinner we had *lutfisk* [cod] and *äggmjölk* [milk and egg soup] with rolls. Mamma said to me, 'Ernst is not suited to be a sailor since he cannot eat *lutfisk*.' As if one ate that at sea. Gullberg [a guest] said: 'He certainly doesn't have that objective, does he?' All of them irritate me terribly but I will stand firm." In May, of the same year, his diary records that Johan Nilsson and he went to Malmö: "Visited a place where they sell seamen's clothing. From that time Johan Nilsson and I resolved to save money to buy such clothes." Again and again Ernst expressed his interest in going to sea. He confided to himself in January 1874 that he definitely would become a seaman at the first reasonable opportunity.<sup>27</sup>

Ernst continued to meet his seamen friends regularly at the railroad station. There was scarcely a day in February 1875 that he failed to meet them. The entry in the diary for February 8 is fairly typical: "Met Carl Lagerholm, Jöns Svensson, and Anders Lidén. Jöns treated us to a half beer each in the Hotel Scandinavian saloon. Six-thirty until eight, Carl Lagerholm and Jöns Svensson were at home with me. The former taught me two new ballads which we played and sang." A few days later Ernst wrote: "Was at church with Carl Lagerholm. Walked with Carl Lagerholm and Jöns Svensson. Saw a student talking with Skarstedtskan [a maid who had worked for the Skarstedt family who was now a prostitute] and he went with her. Treated Carl with a tart. Met Gustaf Krook, the little seaman with the large 'Yankee hat.'" One day in February, when the seamen visited the Skarstedt home, Ernst recorded that "Mamma scolded me because I wish to associate with such terrible people."<sup>28</sup>

Ernst's constant association with the seamen affected his school work negatively so he soon was in trouble with his teachers at the Cathedral School. In February, he wrote: "Ruhe asked me who I was walking with last Wednesday and I told him. When I said that I had neglected to read in *Livy* he said: 'Has association with those seamen so distracted you that you forget established rules and regulations?'"

Brag was furious with me. He roared first: 'Follow along your studies, you Skarstedt, that is more important than to roam around with seaboys!' He is going to tell Papa, etc. When I did not know the answers, he scolded me, asked if I didn't think that history was necessary in all practical work, whereupon I answered, 'No.' " On February 21 a crisis occurred because Ernst's father saw him with a seaman. The entry reads: "Was with Lidén. Papa is angry with me. He said at the table 'The teachers come and complain about you.' Went to Evensong. Met Carl Anderberg who told me that he went to Malmö just in order to meet two prostitutes with whom he slept at night." Moreover, to the great chagrin of the parents, it was soon discovered that Ernst's clothes had brought lice to the Skarstedt home. Early in March, Ernst wrote in his diary: "Met the seamen. We sang together. Went to a disreputable part of town with Lagerholm and Carl Andersson in search of Anderberg and Brumerus. We went to a house where a woman, known as '*Örebro-Mathilda*,' opened the door. We asked her if there were any seamen there. 'No,' she said, 'only students.' " The next evening, Lagerholm and Ernst went to Evensong in the Cathedral. Ernst wrote that the twenty-five minute sermon by the Reverend Ekelund was on the subject, "Weep, Sweden, Over Yourself, and Your Children."<sup>29</sup>

In the midst of his problem, Ernst turned to his stepmother, who responded with kindness and understanding. Early in March, Ernst reported the situation: "Had a long talk with Mamma about the use of me going to school. She said I should have asked Papa long ago for permission to leave school." Three days later a crisis occurred as recorded in Ernst's diary:

March 12. Two o'clock. Papa met Lagerholm and me. Papa scolded me. "Who is this shabby fellow you are going around with?" I said: "He is not a shabby fellow, he is a seaman." Papa continued to scold me because I went around with "prodigal" sons. Among other things he said: "It is not surprising that teachers come to me and say that your son has lost all ambition and he runs around with shabby fellows. I have not seen them at our house previously but the house is mine and they cannot come here. If I have lost my son, I shall not at least lose my home!" He cried out that it is a terrible devil that controls such young boys and that I was completely possessed with evil spirits.<sup>30</sup>

Events began to move rapidly. On March 15 Ernst had a

conference with *Lektor* Petersson "who said to me that I should go to Papa and say that the longing for the sea had gripped me with so much power that I no longer could resist it and must go." Ernst's diary the next day provides the following information: "After lunch I went boldly in to Papa and told him what *Lektor* Petersson said on Monday . . . He said he could not with good conscience let me break off my studies; I could at least wait until the term was over; in the summer I could go. He was sad and walked the floor and muttered. Finally, he said he would speak with *Rektor* Sommelius." Meanwhile, Ernst's friends had left Lund to go to sea. Lagerholm and Andersson signed on the *Alexandria*, an English ship. Others went to Copenhagen awaiting an assignment. At the end of March, he observed: "My but I feel terribly alone! No seaman friend here except Krook." Ernst's close association with seamen had separated him almost completely from his old school friends.<sup>31</sup>

When Ernst went to speak with his father early in April about dropping the class in Hebrew, he received this curt response: "Quit everything you desire, the whole world if this be your choice." The parents were informed by *Lektor* Hultmark that Ernst's achievement in school was lamentable. Consequently, Professor Skarstedt talked with the *rektor*, who informed him that Ernst could leave school whenever he desired, but it was necessary that he come in person to make the arrangements.<sup>32</sup>

The final experience at the Cathedral School is described by Ernst in his diary: "April 10, Saturday. I went to the *rektor* at eleven and announced that I was leaving school. He took my hand, patted me on the shoulder, and wished me good luck at sea. 'May the Lord protect you,' he said. Went to see Ruhe. He laughed, took me by the hand, and patted me, saying: 'You never liked this. You will get along well in the world. Trust in God.' I said goodbye to *Lektor* Petersson. *Lektor* Hultmark was not at home."<sup>33</sup>

The day of parting from family and friends arrived on April 11. Ernst's diary tells the story: "When I went to consult with my father as I was ready to leave, he answered: 'You have thrown yourself upon your own freedom, I am no longer needed. Oh, it is so bitter. I suffer so terribly.' " The concluding events were described by Ernst: "The drayman came for my things at seven. Papa gave me 20 *riksd* and his copy of *Andelig skattkammare*, af Hiller. Uncle Westdahl

gave me 4 *riksd* and I received a new Bible from Axel Malmgren. When I finally said goodbye to Papa he cried and said: 'I have so long pleaded with him in vain, now I must pray for him.' Mother cried. Axel Hall, Anders Malmgren, Eckhard, Anders Andersson, and Lidén at the eight o'clock train when I left for Malmö." Ernst boarded the boat there, and arrived in Göteborg on April 13, 1875.<sup>34</sup>





*P. Wieselgren*

The Rev. Dr. Peter Wieselgren  
(Ernst's grandfather)



Professor C. W. Skarstedt  
(Ernst's father)



Mrs. C. W. Skarstedt  
(Hedvig Wieselgren)



Mrs. Skarstedt & Ernst (on stool)



Ernst and his father (1864)



Waldemar, Ernst and Conrad (1867)



August Anderson, Ernst and Josua Lindahl (1868)



Ernst (1872)



Anna and Ernst (1881)



Ernst (1886)



Ernst and Anna with Esther,  
Wilma and Marcus (1888)



En



A page from Ernst's manuscript,  
*Vid Hennes Sida* (1889)

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## II

# LIFE AS A SEAMAN

When Ernst Skarstedt arrived in Göteborg in the middle of April 1875, he was launching out on a bold adventure in his first departure from home. The problems related to the strangeness of the big seaport city and grave uncertainty about the future were somewhat eased for the eighteen-year-old prospective seaman because he visited with relatives. His maternal grandmother Wieselgren was especially friendly to Ernst although she sincerely hoped that he would abandon his plans to go to sea and return to Lund. The response of others was far more critical.

When an uncle through marriage by the name of Dahlström, who was in the shipping business, learned of Ernst's plans, he greeted him "with a terrible threatening sermon." Ernst trembled in his whole being as he heard the "thunderous outburst." He became speechless when Dahlström's son, Abraham, also a seafaring man, joined in the denunciation of Ernst's plans, portraying life on the sea as "an earthly hell" and "condemned me for 'heartlessness' and 'ingratitude' in seeking to exchange life in a good home for an existence that the poorest and worst off people settle for." But this outburst of opposition did not change the young man's desire to go to sea.<sup>1</sup>

Ernst immediately began seeking a ship which would sign him on. Several offers came to him. A Captain Lowe, for whom Ernst worked in cleaning up his ship, offered him a place, but since the

booking was only for England, the offer was turned down. A Captain Wathne, who was impressed with Ernst's diligence in menial work on his ship, also offered him a place. Since this ship's destination was only Quebec, this invitation was also declined. When Ernst was about ready to sign on the *Chalmette* with Captain White, an American, having Australia as the destination, the ambitious youth was deterred by the insistence of the elder Dahlström, who persuaded him that White's ship was not seaworthy. While Ernst was still in Göteborg, news came that White's ship had sunk in the English Channel with total loss of all people on board.<sup>2</sup>

When Ernst finally signed on, it was with the three-masted ship, the *William*, an old sea-going vessel that had been in the service of an English company. The English owner sold it to a Swedish concern as out-dated. Young Skarstedt's relatives had a financial interest in this battered veteran of the seas. Captain August Dahlström, a hard-bitten and insensitive officer, was a relative, but this in no way was advantageous for the young man. Following hard clean-up work and agony on the *William*, including swelling and pain in the face and neck produced by lye poisoning, Ernst mustered with the crew of the *William* at Göteborg on June 4, 1875.<sup>3</sup>

The period from June 7 until June 16, 1875, when the *William* left the dock, was spent in preparing the ship for sailing, storing supplies, and loading cargo. Ernst's father was on the ship when it put to sea. When the pilot boat was ready to return to Göteborg, Professor Skarstedt joined the pilot, but only after he made one more desperate attempt to persuade Ernst to abandon his sea adventure and return with him to the quiet university town of Lund.<sup>4</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's longing for distant and romantic countries was not to be realized as the ship plowed its way toward its destination through mounting waves. When the crew signed on, they were told that the route would take them to Bordeaux in France, and then to either America or the West Indies. Instead, their destination was Mezen, a minor port on the White Sea in Russia northeast of Archangel. Ernst's fellow crew members became desperate at the sad turn of events. Some of them had been in that area before and each one had vowed that he would never return to that mosquito-infested place of grim isolation. It was dismal conversation that Ernst Skarstedt heard in the cramped quarters of the old ship as time

seemed to stand still during the long and slow voyage to the White Sea.<sup>5</sup>

The crew members varied greatly in age and personality. Andreas (Tobias) Tobiasson, 55, the boatswain, was a short, heavy, gray-haired, and gray-bearded man. He spoke infrequently and, although sometimes cross, his natural bent was to be pleasant and kind-hearted. Anders Johansson, 26, a full-fledged sailor, was a giant of a man, unbelievably strong and vigorous, with dark hair and a brown, full beard. Neither Tobias nor Anders tolerated any opposition. Anders would fight with little provocation.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast with the pugilistic style of Anders was Johanes Johanson, 32, a deck hand, a large, rough, but basically good-natured and somewhat phlegmatic man, whose good temperament was scarcely ever upset. His sea experience extended over one year. Carl "Calle" Henrickson, 28, another deck hand, was a little, chubby creature with the face of an old man, in which stupidity and ignorance were displayed together with self-satisfaction and stubbornness. His life in a large family had been one of austere poverty and constant hardship. Edvin Svenson, 19, a deck hand, was a tall, thin boy with cunning, sparkling eyes. He rarely spoke with fellow crew members. Edvin had indicated that he was a nephew of the steward, but it was soon learned that he was the steward's son. This connection was damaging to Edvin, who was considered to be a spy among the crew. Ernst had great contempt for Alexander Svenson, 45, the cook and steward. He used harsh language in referring to the "pig manners" of the steward. This haughty, tobacco chewing man, caused Ernst great agony.<sup>7</sup>

Ernst found that among the officers, Abraham Dahlström, the captain's brother and second mate, was the most reasonable. He spoke in cordial terms and he was understanding in his orders. Alfred Anderson, the first mate, a red-bearded, energetic man, appeared quite reasonable at the outset. Although he spoke in a civil manner to the crew, he had a habit of harassing them and creating a multitude of jobs, thus depriving them of free time. One observer compared him to the English description, "a sea-devil," although Ernst did not fully share that feeling. Captain August Dahlström was often a problem, but on other occasions he was fairly reasonable.<sup>8</sup>

Food on the ship was plain, but fairly adequate in supply. Each



crew member was given a week's ration on Saturday evening. This consisted primarily of eight pounds of bread, three-fourths of a pound of syrup, four and one-half pounds of salt meat, four pounds of pork, and one pound of butter. In addition, coffee was provided at breakfast and tea at the evening meal. However, the coffee and tea had no resemblance to these drinks served on land, the taste being scarcely better than dishwater. On Sunday, a pudding was served consisting of wheat flour, syrup, and water, cooked together for two and one-half hours. Ernst disliked the taste, but found a solution. He cut the concoction into strips, which he fried in the butter rationed to him. This made a tasty dish. The diet was varied occasionally by pea soup with pieces of pork. The eating utensils consisted of a bowl, knife, and spoon. The meals were eaten in the crowded quarters below where each crew member sat on his sea chest which was fastened to the floor.<sup>9</sup>

The voyage to Mezen on the White Sea involved the normal difficulties of sea-faring people on a small ship. Ernst was violently ill from seasickness the first three days, and like many people with that affliction, he longed for death. There were many days when he worked, ate, and slept in clothes thoroughly soaked from the waves. But his duties continued unabatedly. The regular scrubbing of the decks seemed unnecessary in view of the regular cleansing that came as frequently as the waves rushed over the ship. The routine on the voyage was broken on Sunday evenings when the crew attended prayers conducted by the captain. This traditional form of worship was incomprehensible to Ernst in the context of the captain's bad behavior.<sup>10</sup>

The *William* reached the White Sea on July 11, and four days later, at 4 P.M., the ship anchored at Mezen. A white owl, sitting on the top mast, was the first visitor, but after a cursory glance at ship and crew, it flew to an unknown and more promising place. In the afternoon, four "curiously dressed men" appeared on the ship to arrange routine landing matters, soon leaving after completing their inspection.<sup>11</sup>

Mezen was a prisoner station of the Czarist government. Here heavy wooden planks were loaded by the prisoners for transportation to various places. Other ships—one English, two Danish, and four Swedish—in addition to the *William* were there for the same purpose.



Mezen was a grim and desolate place, the principal building being a sawmill. Huge masses of timbers, in irregular piles, dotted the area around the sawmill and at dockside. A little frame building served as the customs office and, in addition, there were six other buildings—a bath house, a dormitory for the slaves, a church, and residences for officials. All the workers were Russian prisoners, who, because of some crime or disloyalty to the Czarist government, were exiled to Siberia and then sent to Mezen.<sup>12</sup>

The dreary setting among these sad people was compounded in its desperation by a hostile natural force which appeared again and again, as described by Ernst:

As soon as we came into the bay, we were greeted by an enormous cloud of mosquitoes, which attacked us like famished tigers. Nothing more unpleasant can be imagined than these bloodsuckers, which day and night covered us, interfered with our work, kept us from sleeping, battered us so that we became unrecognizable. I cried during the entire first night at Mezen in despair and frenzy over the impossibility of freeing myself from these tormentors.<sup>13</sup>

The crew now had to empty the ballast to make place for the heavy timbers. Several hundred tubs were filled and emptied each day. One day a descending tub struck Ernst in the head so that he almost lost consciousness. Ernst's diary for July 18 reads: "Rolled into a towel, blanket, and oil coat, I had a chance to sleep a few hours last night not having slept for three days and nights. My neck is covered with boils." While the crew worked strenuously, the captain and first mate stared at them, swore, and condemned them because they didn't work hard enough. The sailors sweated and struggled as best they could, never saying a word, and never resting. Ernst has described the situation: "Loaded ballast before noon, 313 barrels. I am so disgusted, downhearted, and lonesome that I am almost overcome. I wish I could fly from here. Dear God, be merciful. . . . I am so tired and worn out I can hardly eat. Unloaded 170 measures of ballast in the afternoon, trimmed the tackle, cleared and spooled the deck. . . . The mosquitoes are here again."<sup>14</sup>

When the ballast was finally emptied, a tug came alongside the *William* with the first of many loads of heavy planks. The situation in the midst of his hard work was described in Ernst's diary:

When I took the inhauling hawser below instead of above the winch crank, the old man gave me a hard kick in the behind, swore at me,

and scolded me. He did the same when I was in the hold scrubbing the boat, because he thought I had not finished fast enough. It is a terrible feeling to be cussed at when you do your best.<sup>15</sup>

The terribly hard work was made more unbearable by the combination of circumstances as described in Ernst's diary: "Burning hot. Last night the mosquitoes almost made me crazy. Cried of despair and helplessness. Terrible slavery with those awful planks. The old man gave Calle the same kind of kick I got yesterday. Three loaves of bread disappeared from my bag. My face, hands, and wrists look like I had small pox. Today we unloaded the whole barge. It contained 603 planks. The mosquitoes in the bow are surely legions."<sup>16</sup>

The back-breaking loading of the huge planks continued amidst agony throughout July and well into August as recorded in Ernst's diary: "All night I was tortured by heartburn so badly I thought I would die. The mosquitoes also agonized me so horribly that I had to go up to the mess room, but then the heartburn became still worse and besides I got awfully cold. Loaded planks. The weather was such that I would have preferred at least a thousand times sooner to lie in the Stehag woods and read a book than to load these planks. The steward taught me to use chalk for heartburn." Two days later, Ernst wrote in his diary: "Papa is 60 years today. I feel an intense longing for home."<sup>17</sup>

As the heavy planks were deposited on the *William*, the captain arranged for additional labor from the Russian prison. Soon Ernst became acquainted with three prisoners—Eikinurka, from St. Petersburg, who had been imprisoned for deserting the Russian fleet; Iluska, who was known as Jakob, 24, from Riga; and Joseph, Jakob's father, and a rabbi, who had been imprisoned for political activity. Since Jakob and Joseph spoke German, Ernst entered into conversations with them. The son at a youthful age had followed his father to prison. They had been in Mezen five years, following previous confinement in Siberia. When Ernst learned of their years of great hardship and present distress, he talked with the captain of the *William* about the possibility of aiding in their escape from Mezen. The captain was in a good mood that day and he suggested that Jakob should come to see him. Since the captain also spoke German, the conversation was carried on effectively.<sup>18</sup>

An agreement was made by the captain with Ernst that the three prisoners could become lost on the boat near sailing time with the understanding that they would provide for their own support and from such rations as Ernst and his friends would give them. When the *William* pulled anchor at Mezen at 8 P.M. on August 11, Jakob, Joseph, and Eikinurka had hidden in the hold of the ship. They had smuggled aboard a considerable amount of food, but really not enough to last the voyage. It was with a feeling of great relief and with a justifiable sense of satisfaction that Ernst watched the last landmarks of Mezen drop out of sight. These rugged experiences were never to pass from his memory.<sup>19</sup>

The journey from Mezen to Cardiff, Wales, was completed early in October, requiring almost eight weeks. The return journey was far more difficult than the outward voyage. On August 12 the ship was grounded during a storm, and after much struggle and with the aid of a change in the tide, it floated to deeper water. Shortly thereafter, when Ernst was at the wheel and did not maneuver fast enough, the captain rushed up to him, an episode described by Ernst in his diary: "When I stood at the helm and did not turn the rudder fast enough, the old man called me a 'snake,' 'black pig,' 'a fool,' etc. Swore at me and hit me twice on the face. Oh, how I long for a quiet, peaceful home! What kind of life is this when there is nothing except swearing and brawling." Ernst wrote the next day: "It is still a wonderful gift to be able to think about past and happy days."<sup>20</sup>

The grounding of the ship had produced such a large leak that the crew had to work strenuously on the pumps several hours a day. On August 14 a terrible storm broke loose. The deck of the ship dipped close to the water again and again and it seemed as if it would sink. When Ernst was ready to adjust a sail in a manner that seemed to be cumbersome, the captain approached him and gave him a hard blow on his right ear. Although he was dazed, he heard the murmur of disapproval from the crew who had watched this base act. Three days later another severe storm broke loose which cast the ship on its side. The vessel was saved only by quick adjustment of the sails. Ernst lost his footing, and was flung across the deck, but by good luck he saved his life by grabbing a post. The storm persisted so that it was not possible to set the sails again for several days. After the evening prayers that day, the captain said something to Ernst. The

young man did not immediately grasp the captain's intent and received two hard blows on his ear. On August 24, the *William* passed the North Cape in good weather. A few days later, the crew sighted some ships. While Ernst stood momentarily on the mast watching with interest as one ship moved rapidly through the waves, he heard the captain shouting at him. "Come down you slow dog. Come down you black Skåning! Preacher king! You damned, dumb little wolf pup!"<sup>21</sup>

The *William* was forced off its course by another severe storm, but on September 13 land was sighted. The following day the *William* passed the Shetland Islands. The slow progress meant that the provisions were running short, and the already meager rations were reduced by half. The crew, however, saw the officers eating potatoes, fish, meat, and butter. The plight of the Russian prisoners became increasingly tragic as their food supply was consumed. Crew members did their utmost to share their meager supplies with the Russians. Eikinurka was the only one who was able to help with the pumping. The rabbi was not even able to continue his normal religious devotions from the two Hebrew books which he brought with him.<sup>22</sup>

The worst storm broke loose with its full fury on September 23. The waves crashed incessantly against and over the ship. Ernst described the situation the next day: "Terrible storm all night. We were tied to the pump all night which we don't dare to leave for a moment. Soaked through and freezing terribly. Lord have mercy upon us. In oil clothes all night and day. I had never thought that I would ever have to experience anything as awful as these days of suffering . . . Slaved worse than animals at the pump. Yes, all this is punishment by the Lord God because I have been disobedient to my parents. Lord forgive me. Have mercy upon us sinners."<sup>23</sup>

During the morning of September 25 the vicious storm yielded to a violent hurricane. This unwelcome visitor thundered so loudly that it was almost impossible to make out the shouted words of frantic crew members at close range. The taut sails were ripped from the masts before they could be lowered. The ship shook and swirled as a plaything in the hands of the violent hurricane. In the midst of terror, the captain ordered the crew to cast off the deck cargo. Plank after plank was cast overboard amidst the whirling and lurching

movements of the ship. The men danced strange dances as they tried to balance themselves, while struggling to dispose of the planks which weighed over 200 pounds each. Sometimes the wind picked up the planks and caused them to make a weird, uncertain dance before dropping them in the raging waters. On other occasions the wind would firmly grasp the planks and hurl them over the heads of the sailors and the deck of the ship to deposit them far out into the ocean. The rain came in great deluges. There was no light. Ernst described his response to this spectacle of nature: "I had but one wish during this whole time: that the ship would capsize, so that there would be a hasty end to the misery. I had no sense of fearing death . . . I had really no desire to save myself since I was so completely exhausted and tired of life. I had the feeling that I wanted to be left in peace and go to the bottom with the ship."<sup>24</sup>

The long voyage from Mezen to Cardiff came to an end on October 4. When the British customs officials came on the *William*, the three Russian prisoners were well secluded in a remote part of the ship. They made a safe journey to land under cover of darkness. Joseph, the rabbi, and Jakob, his son, visited Ernst and the other crew members a few days later. The first comment from them was, "England *gut*." The two men had been received with great hospitality within the Jewish community in Cardiff. Food, clothing, shelter, and money had been given to them. The visitors brought apples and other items to the crew of the *William*. Later in October, Jakob made a last visit to the crew, dressed in a new hat and coat. He reported that his father had secured employment with a Jewish tailor and that his companion, Eikinurka, had signed on an American ship. Ernst Skarstedt's concern for the three prisoners had brought new life and hope to them.<sup>25</sup>

The heavy cargo of the *William* was unloaded at Cardiff without incident. The ship was then put into dry dock where Ernst and the crew worked hard to scrape and clean the hull, and to assist in repairing the damage caused by the series of storms. A month passed in this activity. Ernst went on land on six occasions. He attended a circus, a dramatic performance, and a church worship service in the Norwegian Seaman's Church. He also spent considerable time in bookstores. This was a time of decision for the eighteen-year-old youth:

I had firmly decided to leave the *William* and under no circumstances would I make the voyage to the West Indies. But I had great difficulty in deciding what course of action to take instead. I hesitated a long time, because at times my preference was almost irresistible to go to sea, since hope whispered to me about better luck on another voyage. I thought at the same time with great horror about the forced, unnatural social situation in which I would be forced to enter if I returned home, as well as upon the suffering which possibly would be my lot if I went to sea. . . . Finally, I went to the captain and asked to be freed from my obligation . . . which was granted.<sup>26</sup>

Ernst boarded the Swedish ship, the *Heimdall*, on November 4 for Göteborg, arriving there six days later following a hard voyage. He slept on his chest sharing the captain's abusiveness toward both passengers and crew. A few days later, Ernst boarded the *Skandia* which twenty-three hours later landed at Malmö. A brief train trip brought him to Lund. The chronicle of events for the months between June and October 1875 was over.<sup>27</sup>

### III

## SCHOOL YEARS AT LUND

If Ernst Skarstedt felt any special thrill upon returning to Lund at 5:30 P.M. on November 14, 1875, after an absence of about six months on a perilous sea voyage to the White Sea, no evidence is indicated in his diary. After looking up his old friend, Axel Malmgren, he went to his home at Sigridsgrandgatan 103 (presently Stora Algatan 103). The diary offers no information about his feelings when he met his parents, nor is there any record of their response to him. He records that he went out the next day to meet old friends, to buy a suit of clothes, and to deposit thirty-five *riksdaler*, a part of his savings, in a bank. One evening was spent with Axel Malmgren in a bookstore, and on November 28, he attended the morning worship in the Cathedral, where he was thrilled as the choir sang the familiar Swedish Advent anthem, *Hosianna*.<sup>1</sup>

He was up at 4:30 A.M. on December 13 and went to the University Student Center where the Göteborg, Västergötland, and Värmland student groups observed the Lucia festival. A choir of ninety students, carrying torches in the brisk December night, moved from the campus, and accompanied by young people playing band instruments, they serenaded the homes of professors with joyous Christmas carols. When this mission was over, the choir and hundreds of students returned to Tegnér place, where the torches were piled high, forming dancing shadows on the nearby great Romanesque twin-towered cathedral. After the students performed what Ernst

described as "a fantastic dance in the moonlight," the group broke up. Ernst and other members of his family went home to enjoy coffee. The peace and joyousness of this Lucia occasion was a striking contrast to his recent experience at Mezen on the White Sea.<sup>2</sup>

The days before Christmas were busy as Ernst brought a Christmas tree and shared in decorating it. On Christmas Eve, after a hearty Swedish dinner, which included *lut-fisk*, the presents were opened. Ernst was at the festive *Julotta* [Christmas Matins] service the next morning at 5 A.M., following a short walk through the narrow and romantic streets of Lund. On December 26, he was at the Cathedral again for the traditional *Annandag Jul* (Second Day of Christmas) service.

The year 1876 introduced Ernst into a world of much activity. In January, he began taking music lessons again from Eggeling. Ernst's father bought a new violin, bow, and case for him at a cost of 41.50 kronor. His old instrument was sold to his friend, Lars Elov Nilsson, for 5.50 kronor. In the evenings, he joined a trio consisting of his stepmother, piano; Conrad, flute; and Ernst, violin. Carl Lagerholm and Jöns Svensson, who had returned from their sea voyages to distant places, came to see Ernst. Soon the youths were comparing their experiences across the months. On January 17, Ernst wrote that he was a guest at a wedding, but the most memorable feature was the fact that Gerda Brunnström, whom he continued to like, was one of the guests. Next day, he visited with the *rektor* of the Cathedral School about continuing his studies. Three days later he was again a student.<sup>3</sup>

Ernst was much occupied with musical activities during this period. In addition to continuing violin lessons with Eggeling, he studied this instrument also with W. T. Gnosspeilius, a remarkable person and stimulating teacher. Ernst thoroughly enjoyed playing the violin as his teacher continued to encourage him. Ernst recorded that he had acquired from Lindstedt's bookshop scores of the operas of *Faust*, *Don Juan*, *Figaro*, *Orpheus* and others for piano, violin, and violin-cello, together with Beethoven's *First Symphony* for piano, violin, and flute. One of the regular entries in his diary recounts that he often took his violin and joined others in musical evenings at the home of *Doktorinnan* Helena Fredrickson.<sup>4</sup>

He skipped his English class in February 1877 in order to



attend a concert in the chapel where he heard a Beethoven quartet and two of Romberg's compositions. In May he attended a recital by Wieniawski, the distinguished violinist: "Wieniawski played so fabulously that one could not believe it without having seen and heard it. I cannot say more than that he is a trollmaker, a bewitching spirit, or something like that, rather than a man." He wrote a letter to *The Violinist* in New York, in June 1918, forty years later, in which he thanked the editor for publishing Ysaye's article about Wieniawski, recalling also with enthusiasm the concert that Wieniawski had played in Lund in 1877. In May 1877 Ernst sent to *Tidskrift för Svensk Ungdom*, a journal for young people, an essay entitled, "Something about Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven."

Unlike formal classwork, where his attendance was erratic, he never missed a violin lesson. He was enthusiastic about his violin teacher. In June 1877 he wrote in his diary: "God bless Gnossopelius for his kindness to me." Ernst played and sang with formal and informal ensembles. He was a member of a boy's quartet that sang regularly at funeral services and of the choir that performed at church services on Sunday mornings and evenings.<sup>5</sup>

Ernst always liked animals, especially dogs and horses. He found wonderful companionship with Freya, his dearly loved dog; but Freya was a problem as well as a joy. Ernst's diary records again and again the trouble which Freya caused him with his stepmother. Although Freya must have been a remarkable dog, at least according to Ernst's evaluation, she had some normal problems. Ernst had not trained Freya well, and accidents occurred, much to his stepmother's disgust. He wrote in his diary, in October 1876, that through a wonderful turn of fate, his mother and father were away all day so he had time to repair the damage done by Freya in tearing the wallpaper in one of the rooms. But Freya, too, had friends, and with unfailing regularity, a litter of pups would arrive. In June 1877, Freya's constant adding to the canine population in Lund created a crisis. Ernst wrote: "Papa quarreled with me about the pups. He asked Lars to get someone to come in order to shoot the pups but Lars did not go. I resolved to run away if anything bad happened."<sup>6</sup>

Ernst and his friends sought entertainment of various types. In September 1876 he saw a performance in Lund of Jules Verne's classic, *Around the World in Eighty Days*. In November, he joined his

friend Axel Hall to see a similar performance at Malmö. In January 1877, he went with his friend Carlson to the Railroad Hotel in Lund where, for a fee of twenty-five öre each, they saw the celebrated "Fat Alexandrowna." Ernst enjoyed walking with his friends, especially Per Jonsson and Axel Hall. In June, when Per and he were strolling south of Lund, they became interested in some gypsies who had four bears, a donkey, a horse, and a monkey. There were many croquet games at which Ernst excelled. In August, he lost his first match of the summer. He was a good swimmer, and when the weather was favorable, his friends and he spent happy afternoons at swimming parties.<sup>7</sup>

There were more formal occasions when Ernst was dressed in his finest clothes and stood with the Cathedral School boys to cheer King Oscar II during his two-day visit to Lund in October 1876. The youth was impressed with the pomp and circumstance that surrounded the monarch. An understandable pride must have possessed him when at the dinner table his father recounted his conversation with the King. This was long before the circumstances and ideas that made Ernst Skarstedt an articulate anti-royalist.<sup>8</sup>

An important goal of Swedish youth was to achieve good results in stated school subjects leading to the *student examen*. Successful completion of this goal meant that the young person could be called a "student" meaning that he was qualified to enter a university. Ernst did not enjoy the routine of normal school studies. His forthright diary records again and again his record of skipping classes. In the latter part of September 1876, he wrote: "Skipped English and in the afternoon, Lars Nilsson, Danielson, and I went to Malmö." On November 8, the entry is: "Skipped classes all day," and the following day it read: "Skipped English today." His irregular attendance, particularly in English and history, continued throughout the year. On May 12, 1877, he reported an austere conference with *Lektor* Dubb, the English teacher, because Ernst had not attended the English class since April 14. This was rather critical because the examination conducted by the "censors" was scheduled for the latter part of May.<sup>9</sup>

Ernst wrote an interesting account of a classroom experience in Lund:

It is the sixth class which has just started. The teacher, *Lektor* A. V. Brag, is sitting down at his desk. The boys sit on benches of the same

kind that are found in old folk schools. When the class begins, the students have their textbooks in history open behind the back of the students ahead of them. Those in the first row hide their books as best they can. When a student is asked a question, he reads generally from the open book. The teacher walks around suspiciously in order to prevent being duped but the boys have unfailing ways of forcing him to hurry back to his desk. Every time the teacher puts his foot on the floor as he walks, the boys at the same time put their feet on the floor. It sounds then as if a whole regiment is marching, which is not unnoticed in the next room or in the room below. The teacher returns to the desk and remains there during the entire class.<sup>10</sup>

Although Ernst's attendance at classes was irregular, his general intelligence and knowledge served him well in the *student examen*. In May 1877 he was informed by the "censors" who were responsible with the teachers for determining the standing of the students, that he had passed the examination. He bought a white student cap, a mark of distinction of that time for students in Sweden. Ernst had achieved good marks in various subjects including the following: *cum laude* in Swedish, German, French, Latin, Greek, mathematics, and natural science, *approbatur* in Christianity, English, and philosophy, together with *improbatur* in history.<sup>11</sup>

Several festive events related to the *student examen* were enjoyed by Ernst. Early in June he participated in the *sexa*, a traditional celebration involving much eating and drinking. June 6 was promotion day when all the "students" went in a formal procession to the church. There was a speech in Latin by Professor Albert Lysander and one in Swedish by the Bishop. The garlands, symbol of academic achievement, were distributed. There were additional festivities with much eating and drinking. Three days later, there was a great outing of "students" in the woods at *Bökebergsslätt* south of Lund. The new status as "students" had many pleasant outward manifestations which for an interval of time blotted out the inner struggle of the young man who now faced important decisions for the future.<sup>12</sup>

The entire Skarstedt family in June 1877 went to their summer home at Stehag, northeast of Lund near *Västra Ringsjön*. In a few days, Ernst met Captain Christopher Ekströmer, a colorful seaman with a record of exciting adventures in many parts of the world. The captain was a very large man who had a pleasant social manner. Ernst

was soon attracted to Ekströmer as he recited long and interesting stories of his experiences and escapades on sea and land. This world traveler was somewhat rough and coarse in his speech. Ekströmer was a heavy drinker, and when he drank to excess, he became a problem. However, the sea-going veteran and his wife were kind and generous to Ernst. Here he found a fellowship that was not available for him in his own family. The Ekströmers had an attractive daughter, Emmy, about Ernst's age. Ernst thought her beautiful, but he found her disposition unattractive. The Ekströmers also had two younger children.

Ernst's relationship with the Ekströmers became closer as the problems with his stepmother and father increased. Ernst described the situation: "Papa never speaks a word to me. In the evening when Mamma asked if we didn't wish to go on the veranda and play our musical instruments, Papa began immediately with his disagreeable manner, 'Don't ask him, he does always as he wants.' " Then Ernst continued: "If I only knew for certain that I could hire on a ship, I would certainly go there and leave home and dismiss all thoughts about any future except as a pioneer."<sup>13</sup>

Although Ernst played croquet, swam, and visited extensively with the Ekströmers, this was not a happy time for him. On a July evening, Ernst and his father were visiting the Ekströmers. What happened is found in Ernst's words recorded that night: "When Ekströmer offered Birger Råberg and me punch (Papa wanted me to have a fruit drink instead) and as I raised the glass in a toast, Papa rushed up furiously, 'That is the beginning of drunkenness,' he began. 'The young people of today are such rascals who have no respect for their parents approval or the slightest piety! Only defiance for their parents.' Birger and I withdrew frightened." But the relationships only worsened. Later that month following an argument, he wrote: "Mamma naturally started to cry and began to utter a lot of absurdities, 'Having children cannot be justified before God, step children at least. May God allow them to die one after another since they show such roguish ways.' Papa became furious over her involving God's name in such babbling."<sup>14</sup>

As the summer passed, Ernst contemplated his future. He would not study at Lund University under any circumstances. He did not like formal studies and he was certain that he had no talent for

academic discipline. Moreover, he dreaded terribly the prospect of living in Lund with his family. Late in August, Ernst had a serious discussion with his father about future plans. Professor Skarstedt was violently opposed to Ernst's desire to go to sea again. As a sort of compromise among alternatives, the father proposed finally that Ernst should enroll in the Royal Academy of Music at Stockholm.<sup>15</sup>

At the end of August, Ernst went to Stockholm with the intention of studying music. The decision was obviously made too late as events were to demonstrate. During the first week of September, Ernst had a violin audition at the music academy. Although the audition was pleasant, Ernst was informed that there would be no regular place for him in the academy during that term. The two vacant places were assigned to earlier applicants. This was his first disappointment in Stockholm.

After consultation with his father, Ernst sought admission to the *Tekniska Högskola*. Fr. Svensson, his mathematics teacher in Lund, had urged him to enroll there. His credentials in mathematics were especially strong from his school experience in Lund. He was admitted but only as "a special student." A heavy schedule of studies was undertaken including mathematics, physics, chemistry, geometry, drawing, and laboratory projects.<sup>16</sup>

There were some pleasant interludes that enlivened the otherwise dull life at the institute. He was entertained at the home of his uncle, Harald Wieselgren, deputy librarian of the Royal Library; and by the families of Professor Johan Olof Rosenberg; Bookdealer Huldberg; *Lektor* Elmlblad; Merchant Lundman; Pastor Wadström; and others. In Stockholm, he met sixty-eight-year-old Captain Carlson who had lived for many years in London and was a member of the London Phrenological Society. When Ernst received the captain's analysis of his life after he had applied the techniques of a phrenologist on him, he found as recorded in his diary late in January 1878, that the evaluation was without error: "Mr. Skarstedt," he had said, "is more talented in geometry than in algebra. Mr. Skarstedt has a sense of form, a sense of color, and a sense of place; he is impetuous, but Mr. Skarstedt regrets it next day; he likes good food and drink and must strive against this inclination while there is still time; Mr. Skarstedt is not an historian; he has a good disposition; he does not give away his clothes but he is not stingy."<sup>17</sup>

Many afternoons were spent by Ernst reading for pleasure in the Royal Library instead of attending classes. He played cards during evenings with his friends when he might have been preparing the next day's classroom assignment. At home he enjoyed reading Mark Twain especially during this period. Ernst attended and enjoyed several performances at the Royal Opera, *Faust* and *Don Juan* being his favorites. He enjoyed concerts and recitals. He was a member of a small orchestra at the *Tekniska Högskola* at Stockholm and, during the year, he was chosen to be the ensemble's conductor. His attendance at church worship services was maintained unfailingly. He often heard Dr. Peter Fjellstedt, the famous preacher, with great pleasure, as he recorded in his diary. One day he attended the English church in Stockholm, but he reported that he could not understand a word of the sermon.<sup>18</sup>

Ernst associated with several friends of his own age, including Vahlin, Axel Malmgren, and Eckhard Bergendorff. Eckhard was an intimate associate, an artist and an old friend from Lund, with whom he visited art galleries and museums. Then there were frequent trips to Södertälje, thirty miles southwest of Stockholm, at the home of the Charles Ekströmer family. Emmy Ekströmer was an attraction, and on several occasions Ernst confided in his diary that she was beautiful and attractive. The young man enjoyed especially the company and conversation of Captain Ekströmer who understood Ernst and his problems. The captain, through his kind and considerate interest in Ernst, was a unique source of help to him, although the latter found his stories and accounts occasionally off-color. When Ekströmer was bragging about his conquest of women, and inquired about Ernst's sexual experience, the latter replied, "I have decided never to have that experience before I am married." Ekströmer said that this resolve was praiseworthy but he had known only one man in his life who could say that.<sup>19</sup>

When the new term in the technical school started in January 1878, Ernst enrolled but without great enthusiasm. His course of study included as previously, mathematics, science, and drawing. His class and laboratory responsibilities required 32½ hours per week with 10½ hours devoted to mathematics. However, a growing conviction possessed Ernst that he was not suited for this kind of life. In April he shared frankly in a letter to his father the feelings

which he had: "What I said last summer has happened, I cannot study, this is not my calling. During my first weeks here I made the finest resolves and I studied hard in order to do the impossible, but I naturally found myself incapable of doing it. The further it went, the more my prophecy became a reality with the result that already in October and November I thought again about going to sea. I did not wish to say anything about it until now which I can do legally." Ernst became twenty-one on April 14, 1878.<sup>20</sup>

Ernst's letter to his father included an urgent request that his father provide the money that was his through inheritance from his mother. The amount was estimated to be 2,500 kronor. Ernst informed his father that he wanted the inheritance money now because it would enable him to do a good deed. Captain Ekströmer, his close friend, was now in financial distress. He explained that Ekströmer had been misled by his brother to give up a lucrative position as an agent at a Canadian colony project in return for a remunerative one at a sawmill in Sweden. Ernst's friend had been deceived since the sawmill project never became a reality. Ekströmer had connections with a financial concern which he believed would be lucrative. All that he needed was money for travel expenses to England, France, and elsewhere to make the necessary contacts. In return Ekströmer would give Ernst a mortgage on his property in Södertälje.<sup>21</sup>

It is apparent that Ernst's request, contained in a letter addressed to his father on April 22, was rejected. However, he pleaded with his father to understand why he wished to leave the technical school and become a seaman: "Why cannot Papa reconcile himself with the thought that I am a seaman? Would Papa rather see me as a student who never studies? How gladly I would follow Papa's wishes! But if I did, it is certain that I would soon become an incompetent person, and basically a destroyed man. . . . I cannot, I will not believe that Papa wants me to become like that."<sup>22</sup>

Apparently Ernst's insistence that he was not suited for academic studies finally convinced the reluctant father. Ernst rejoiced in the changed attitude of his father. The first sentence of his letter late in April, to his mother and father reads: "Everlasting thanks for the letter which I received today, which, so to speak, infused a new day in my perspective." In the diary for that day he

wrote: "Letter from Axel Hall and a delightful one from Papa with 100 kronor, Papa gives his blessing on my trip, for my life, for all that I do, and my safe return. The letter today was quite unlike that of the 21st, in which he asks, how I thought he felt, when he on the 16th, after receiving my letter, read the evening devotions from Hiller, which began thus: 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief! Thus cried out the father of a bewitched son.' " <sup>23</sup>

In the latter part of April 1878, Ernst completed plans for his attempt to go to sea once more. His parents had sent him his former seaman's gear which he now readied for use again. In Stockholm he bought insect powder, oiled his sea chest, and purchased a used seaman's cap. In the first days of May, he sent to Lund the books and clothes that he would not use in his new vocation. There were farewells to his relatives and family friends in Stockholm and the last drinks with old companions. On May 3 he traveled 16½ hours on the steamer *Sten Sture* from Stockholm, arriving in Gävle, an important port city on the Bothnian Sea, the next day. There he looked up the former seaman Frank Fahm, who brought him to Mr. Bodman, a Swedish customs official. A letter of introduction to the customs official from Harald Wieselgren, Ernst's uncle, stated that for some strange reason Professor C. W. Skarstedt's oldest son wished to exchange his student's cap for a seaman's cap. <sup>24</sup>

The serious attempt to sign on a ship at Gävle was a frustrating experience which ended in failure. Captain Broman of the *Hindoo* had a full crew already mustered. Ernst went to various Swedish hiring halls but only in vain. Visits to Norwegian and German ships had the same negative results. After approximately a week in which he met only with discouragement, he left Gävle on the ship *Gävle* for Stockholm. He took off a few days for a side trip to Södertälje to visit the Ekströmer family. He boarded the *Venus*, on May 11, at Södertälje and as an interested and delighted passenger for sixty-three hours, he enjoyed the scenic and historic Göta Canal route to Göteborg as a new stirring of nature in the spring season brought life and beauty to flowers and trees. When he arrived in Göteborg he brought his belongings to his brother Conrad's residence at Husargatan 14. He sought energetically but in vain to sign on a ship at Göteborg. There was a great lull in shipping activity in Sweden and in Europe generally. <sup>25</sup>



Since all doors to employment on the sea seemed to be closed, Ernst reflected on alternative possibilities. He placed an announcement in *Göteborgs Handels-Tidning* indicating his availability as a tutor for children in a family. While waiting for something to develop, he frequented the bookstores, and, on May 17, in Richter's store, he was pleasantly surprised when suddenly Josua Lindahl, his former teacher and friend at Lund, entered the store in search of an address calendar. Ernst followed his highly esteemed friend to the railroad station. Ernst listened attentively as Josua Lindahl talked about America, a kind of portent of the shape of things to come.<sup>26</sup>

Ernst waited patiently in Göteborg for a response to his advertisement relative to a tutorial position but no reply was forthcoming. Moreover, his money was almost at an end so he borrowed thirty kronor from Abraham Dahlström. In the midst of the distressing situation in which he could find no employment at sea and no response to his willingness to be a tutor, he met Reverend Kleberg, an old acquaintance who had recently been ordained as a clergyman. Kleberg informed Ernst that he could assure him of a place as a tutor in the family of Count Carl af Trampe, at Mjölkeröd, in Bohuslän, when autumn came.<sup>27</sup>

Since almost three months must elapse before the prospect of employment with Count Trampe could be realized, Ernst accepted the offer of his old friend Captain Ekströmer to serve as the tutor for his two children. He went to Södertälje the latter part of May 1878, and from there he went with the Ekströmer family to Vreta, on the island of Värmdön in the Stockholm archipelago. The months of June and July and most of August were occupied with his tutorial assignment. At the outset, he spent five hours a day with Melcher, nine, and his younger sister, Karin. The assignment was soon extended to six hours a day. The children made quite good progress but, at times, the results were surprising. When Melcher was being quizzed by Ernst in Bible history, he gave some unusual answers, identifying Cain as a farmer and Abel as an inspector. In the latter part of August, Melcher and Karin were examined by Ernst in the presence of Captain and Mrs. Ekströmer and a few visitors. The parents were pleased with the performance of the children. Ernst received hearty thanks for his fine tutorial services. He in turn expressed his appreciation for the pleasant months that he had shared

in the Ekströmer family circle. The financial situation of the Ekströmers as Ernst well knew made it impossible for them to compensate him.<sup>28</sup>

Ernst loved the glories of nature on Värmdön. In a letter to his parents in August, he wrote: "As you know I live on Värmdön in the midst of the most beautiful nature. Mountain and sea alternate with fields and meadows in pleasing the eyes. There is an unusually rich flora here. The dear little *linnaea borealis* of which a specimen is enclosed, grows uninhibitedly in large numbers at the Vreta cove. The thrushes have sung almost every day since I came here. To sum it up, I must say that it is simply delightful here."<sup>29</sup>

As the summer days passed, Ernst began to make plans for the tutorial post that Pastor Kleberg had promised him. In correspondence with Count Trampe, it was agreed that Ernst should be available about September 1, and that he should be paid 400 kronor a year, plus his maintenance. Late in August, Ernst boarded the *Juno* at Fredricksborg for Stockholm. He then traveled to Falköping where he spent the night, and to Göteborg, where he visited his grandmother Wieselgren. While in Göteborg, he met his father who was on a fishing trip. When Professor Skarstedt heard that Ernst was there, he said only at the outset, "Is that cuckoo here?" Later his attitude became friendly. Ernst was pleased to receive twenty kronor from him as a good will gift.<sup>30</sup>

Ernst traveled from Göteborg August 30 on the ship *Albert Ehrensvärd* to Grebbestad, and then by carriage the seven miles to Mjölkeröd. Count Trampe met him at the door of his mansion. Everything was pleasant in the reception which he received, except that the count's dog bit Ernst. The young tutor was provided with a pleasant room. Since the children had measles when Ernst arrived, he had several days of freedom from his tutorial duties. He went with Count Trampe on long walks in the beautiful countryside of western Bohuslän. One pleasant day was spent on the sea in the count's yacht, *Thyra*. A festive birthday party was held early in September when the Count became thirty-seven years old. In the evenings, Ernst played the violin for the family or read poetry and prose from the collection he had assembled since 1876 and labeled *Variana*. One evening, the count sought to entertain Ernst in the summer house by singing a ballad about Adam and Eve which Ernst considered "vile."<sup>31</sup>

Ernst began lessons with the Trampe children during the second week. He spent usually four to five hours each day with Gomer, Adam, and Valdemar. The children responded quite well to Ernst's efforts. However, one day when Gomer was somewhat willful, Ernst slapped him so that he cried loudly. The countess rushed in and told Ernst pointedly that she did not approve of his actions in slapping the children. Ernst acknowledged that in his response to the countess he was impudent. After a considerable exchange of words, tempers cooled, and Ernst continued with the lessons. He had found that the Ekströmer children had been more willing pupils than those of Count and Countess Trampe.<sup>32</sup>

Count Trampe criticized Ernst severely because he formed a close friendship with Jonsson, the young farm foreman. Since Ernst was a tutor in the Trampe household, he pointedly informed Ernst that his association with Jonsson must stop immediately. In October, Ernst wrote to his parents about the situation. He told them how much he liked Jonsson, a fine young man of twenty-four years in contrast with his dislike for the Trampes, especially for the countess. He prophesied that he was certain to have conflicts with her. Another incident had occurred that irritated the countess. When Ernst had shared an invitation for the evening dinner at Captain Ortenbladh's home, he had not offered his arm to *Fru* Fogelström, the count's sister, when they left the table, with the result that she was not escorted to the other room. When, in addition to the countess, *Fru* Fogelström reprimanded him for his bad manners, "I said to her if she would have waited a whole hour, I would still have done the same thing and left the room alone. As far as Countess Trampe is concerned, I am determined not to be betrayed by her smiling, proper, sweet, womanly demeanor." Ernst was not really suited for the kind of social life and conduct that the conformity to custom in that class dictated.<sup>33</sup>

Early in December, Ernst learned from Mr. Kjellman, a druggist in Tanum, that "the Trampes slandered him in the whole area as a horrible person, whom the count only wished he could get rid of. I whipped the boys, rolled around on the floor, associated with the farm laborers, ran around and courted and wrote letters to maids, etc. The countess had said that I was a 'morally depraved person'.... She had even said that I drank beer with the farm

foreman in a pub in Sannäs, etc.”<sup>34</sup>

Although Ernst had problems with the count and countess and their children, another more pleasant development was also a part of the reality of these months at Mjölkeröd, a development that was to be decisive for Ernst's life. One day Anna Hult, an attractive twenty-year-old girl from Stora Foss, Bohuslän, joined the Trampe household to weave carpets for the family. Ernst was soon impressed with Anna. On September 22 he wrote: “Talked half an hour with Anna Hult. Find to my horror, that I am in love with this dear girl. She is twenty years old.” A few days later, he went to see her in the room where she was weaving carpets. At dinner that day, the countess said to him jokingly, “If Mr. Skarstedt goes and courts our girls again I will then come and. . .” When Anna had completed her work for the Trampes after two weeks, he sent letters and poems to her. He often went to Sannäs, near Mjölkeröd, where he visited with Anna. At the end of October he wrote in his diary: “How I long often for Anna. Will she become my wife? Let the best happen, O God.”<sup>35</sup>

Since Anna Hult was destined to have such an important role in the life of Ernst Skarstedt, it is interesting to learn what qualities he sought in the one who might become his wife, and the relationship of Anna to his views. In October he wrote to his friend, Lars Eric Nilsson, on this subject: “The girl whom I will marry must fully sympathize with me, she must be able to follow me without hesitation to the end of the world, she must be able, in a word, to be for me and help me in exactly the same way as I will do everything for her. Such a one is hard to find, and according to my belief, it is impossible to find one among the so-called fine people, who seldom or never will sacrifice their vanity and whims.” Then Ernst confided to his friend that he had made a discovery:

Meanwhile, I have become acquainted with a girl who seems truly to be able to fulfill my expectations of her. The said girl lived here two weeks in order to weave carpets, at which she is most highly skilled. She is between nineteen and twenty years old and “beautiful as the morn,” as the saying goes. I have been trying to say that one can find a good and helpful girl, but not among those who have been polished with fine education and style, and brought up in the salons of the fine world. When I have said this I do not mean that she should be

an ignorant person, no, she should have intelligence, as her outstanding adornment. Anna fulfills all those conditions.<sup>36</sup>

As the months passed Ernst's relationship with the Trampes worsened. Moreover, his restlessness prompted him to reflect again on the future. Since Anna Hult had come into his life, the future seemed to be more important than heretofore. His thoughts had been turned to America, especially since his friend and former teacher, Josua Lindahl, had emigrated there. Lindahl wrote to Ernst about the promise of American life. The prospect appealed to Ernst. Moreover, Ernst's long and friendly association with Captain Ekströmer became an important factor. In November the captain had invited Ernst to join his family and emigrate to America.

Early December, Ernst spoke with the count and asked him: "Do you wish me to leave this place?" "Yes, that is right," he answered. Ernst and the count then had a pleasant conversation relative to Ernst's interest in going to America. The count thought that this was indeed appropriate for a man of Ernst's disposition. The count also acknowledged his belief that Ernst had only good intentions toward Anna. On December 11 Ernst left the employ of Count and Countess Trampe. He received in compensation 108 kronor and 92 öre after 2 kronor 19 öre had been deducted for postage stamps. The next day, he left Grebbestad on the *Albert Ehrensvärd* for Göteborg, a distance of approximately sixty miles. In Göteborg, he was a guest of grandmother Wieselgren whom he told about his love for Anna. She expressed the hope that he would work hard for Anna's sake. At 10 A.M., on December 13, 1878, Ernst boarded the *Rollo* for Hull and eventually America. Another new period in his life had begun.<sup>37</sup>

## IV

# EMIGRATION TO AMERICA

Ernst Skarstedt stood on the deck of the *Rollo* as it moved slowly past the gray rocks outside the port of Göteborg on December 13, 1878. This young man was soon to begin a new life in America amidst the challenges and uncertainties that confronted an immigrant. Ernst was certain about some aspects of life. He found onerous the Swedish class distinction and social snobbery in the circles where birth had placed him. Moreover, he wished above everything else to become a pioneer farmer in the American West. Although he was well-informed about the exacting social expectations of his status in Sweden, he was ill-informed, and in several ways he was also ill-suited, for the rugged life of a pioneer. However, the years would chronicle his effective response to most challenges, and in the process he generally gained that precious freedom which he cherished above everything else.

The voyage from Göteborg to Hull, where the *Rollo* arrived on December 18, was uneventful. The railroad journey across England from Hull to Liverpool, during which the train traveled at a speed of forty-one miles an hour, brought him to his destination at 9 P.M. the same day. Ernst boarded the *Polynesian* of the Allan Line for Halifax on December 19. Good fortune smiled on him when Captain Ekströmer's influence was effective in gaining some special concessions in the transportation arrangements. Ernst paid for a ticket in steerage, the normal emigrant class, but an exception was made so

that he could travel in the "intermediate" class. There he was joined by two Frenchmen and two Englishmen who were also emigrants. Ernst often visited the Ekströmers in their better quarters and through their influence he often played the violin or piano for passengers in the salon. On Christmas eve he joined the Ekströmers in their cabin. He drank a *skål* to Anna and he received a muffler, raisins, and oranges as Christmas presents. On Christmas day he provided piano accompaniment for the steward who sang some of Sankey's familiar songs at a public service. There were occasional drinks and pleasant conversation with the Ekströmers and other passengers. The voyage across the Atlantic was quite smooth except for one night when the crew found it necessary to shut down the engines because of the intensity of the storm.<sup>1</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt was twenty-one years old when he first set foot upon the North American continent at Halifax, December 29, 1878. The travel route took Ernst via Quebec and Montreal, where he crossed the two-mile bridge, the longest in the world, and proceeded to Toronto, where the temperature was 35° below zero. The deep snow drifts, piled high by the howling northern wind, stalled the train once for several hours. On January 4, 1879, he entered the United States on a ferry across a bay of Lake Huron. A brief stop was made at Chicago. As the train sped through Wisconsin, the young traveler compared the snow-covered landscape with the winter beauty of Sweden along the Göta Canal. The 2,400-mile railroad journey in an uncomfortable and crowded coach, with only a brief stop at St. Paul, lasted almost a week before Ernst arrived at Litchfield, Minnesota, which was also the destination of the Ekströmers, who had relatives there.<sup>2</sup>

Ernst's first job in the United States was with P. Ekström, the sheriff of Goodhue County, who was married to the sister of Mrs. Charles Ekströmer. His many duties included taking care of two horses, keeping five large stoves blazing during the severe cold, and serving as handyman for the large family. The young Lund student learned to milk cows, a strange and baffling experience at the outset since the animals seemed to be most uncooperative. He had never held a saw in his hands before coming to Litchfield, but during the first three days he uncovered the mysteries of this useful tool and sawed three loads of oak and ash logs. It soon became common for

him to saw a cord of wood a day. The weather was indescribably cold, with the temperature far below zero for many weeks. Moreover, the sharp wind intensified the effects of the cold as he sawed the wood in the open air with only the heavens above him. One day when it was thirty-five degrees below zero he felt like resting and sat down on the pile of logs. Soon he had a dreamy, listless feeling, but managed to stagger into the house and safety before losing consciousness.<sup>3</sup>

When Sheriff Ekström returned from official business on bitterly cold nights, Ernst's job required that he get out of bed, dress, unharness the horses, rub them with warm water, give them hay, and half an hour later provide oats and water. When the well froze over, which was a common experience, he had to open the platform and lower himself slowly to the point where he could break or thaw the ice. He clattered to the top of the slippery, pointed roof to clean the chimney. For all his efforts the young Swedish immigrant received only board and room.<sup>4</sup>

Although Ernst worked hard and gained the full esteem of the Ekströms, he realized that this job had no future for him. Soon after arriving in Litchfield, he wrote to the appropriate authorities in Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Florida, requesting information as to the possibility and cost of acquiring some land. He read carefully the various emigrant guide books that described settlement in the several states. He wrote about his discouraging situation to his friend and former teacher in Lund, Dr. Josua Lindahl, now a professor of science and mathematics at Augustana College. Lindahl advised Ernst to go to Lindsborg, in the Smoky Valley of central Kansas, where the Reverend Olof Olsson, in 1869, had founded a colony of Swedish immigrants from Värmland. Olsson, who was now Lindahl's colleague at Augustana College, spoke enthusiastically about the promise of life for a young man in this recently established state. Arrangements were made so that Ernst could work for a Swedish farmer in the Lindsborg community.<sup>5</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt left Litchfield on March 20, 1879, purchasing a railroad ticket to Topeka, Kansas, for \$22.55. He arrived there two days later and immediately bought a ticket for Salina for \$4.75. Ernst's funds were almost exhausted although he had spent only fifteen cents on bread and cheese during the long trip from



Minnesota. He received a ride to Lindsborg the next day with three people on a farm wagon for seventy-five cents. Ernst described the surroundings of his new home as he viewed it that first day:

The weather was beautiful, the air was mild and pleasant, but the landscape was terribly desolate. Hour after hour, we rode through a boundless, barren prairie, where here and there stood a little hut like an island in an ocean. I found myself indescribably oppressed, lonely, and miserable. Tears came to my eyes. Was this the place that I had chosen for my home—this dismal, terrible wilderness—I who longed for something beautiful with woods and mountains and sea? I learned only later that even the prairie possesses something magnificent in the midst of its loneliness and desolation. But the first impression was heartbreaking.

There was no road, but only an unmarked trail across the prairie, and the tracks that led to the communities of Smolan, Falun, and Salemsborg, were confusing except to the experienced resident of the area.<sup>6</sup>

Ernst soon met Peter Fallquist, his future employer, and his family, who lived four miles northwest of Lindsborg. Young Skarstedt discovered that the Fallquists were genuinely kind people. The food was good and plentiful. One day Ernst was especially pleased when Fallquist purchased a fine lamp for him so that he could read and write comfortably at night. The principal grievance was that prayers were too frequent and too long. When returning tired and hungry at supper time from his hard work in the fields, he sat through not only the table grace, but also the Lord's Prayer, the benediction, and occasionally the Apostle's Creed. Ernst was also disturbed occasionally when at mealtime the father searched the children's hair for lice and when one of the tiny vermin was found, a knife was used to dispatch it on the spot. Ernst's small sleeping room in the attic served also as the location of Fallquist's work as a shoe-maker. In the midst of the shoe-maker's equipment, old shoes, partially repaired shoes, pieces of leather, and the accompanying odor of leather goods, was a bed. When the one small window was opened, a multitude of insects, including in the summer hordes of grasshoppers, swarmed into the room.<sup>7</sup>

Skarstedt's day started between 5 and 6 A.M. Work in the fields began at 7:30 A.M. Fallquist's farm produced oats, wheat, corn,

broomcorn, and potatoes. It was necessary to clear the field of last year's cornstalks, plow the land, harrow, and seed the ground. His first job was to do the plowing which he describes: "I had never put my hand to a plow, and at the outset I could not do it right, but overstrained myself in lifting the plow, kept pressing it down as the horses moved, and did other unnecessary things until I got a burning headache. It went better the next day, and in a short while, I could plow 2-2½ acres a day without overexertion. I worked late at night, because for some strange reason, I liked that work out on the free prairie in the company of my efficient, fine, and co-operative horses." The most unpleasant aspect of farm work in Kansas was the dust, which swirled incessantly with even a slight wind and filled the eyes, ears, and nose, and penetrated under the clothes. When he took a bath twice a week in an ordinary wash tub, there was some relief. Skarstedt worked hard and effectively. One day he cut by hand with a corn-knife, 11,760 hills of corn, with an average of six stalks in each planting.<sup>8</sup>

Young Ernst had a dreadful experience on the farm when he might have been killed. While making a turn on a field with a team of horses and harrow, one section of the harrow pulled loose. Unwisely, he put his left foot on the top part of the harrow with its sharp points. While he tried to repair the harrow, the horses began to bite at each other and one of them jumped forward. When Ernst grabbed the reins, he grasped only the right one. The horses pulled sharply to the right, which caused the harrow to stand on its edge, and Ernst fell backwards with his leg in the sharp implement. He did not dare to let go of the rein because the horses would then have run at full speed, with the likely consequence of disaster for him. The result was that the horses pulled and ran in a circle. Ernst felt a severe strain on his leg, expecting that it would break momentarily. He yelled desperately at the top of his voice. Soon he saw through the whirling dust the figure of Fallquist who came running at full speed. As Fallquist came near the scene of the accident, the harrow broke, and the horses ran away, leaving Skarstedt sprawled on the dusty earth. The spikes of the harrow had cut a large gash in his leg and had also injured his knee. The horses had suffered only minor injury. Ernst learned later that a farmer who was riding on a nearby road had seen his predicament, but had not stopped to offer his help.<sup>9</sup>

The farm directly southwest of Fallquist's was occupied by Dr. John Rundström, a Swedish physician, who had come to the community in 1869. Young Skarstedt made his way there slowly and painfully, limping and crawling. The doctor cleaned the wounds with alcohol and bandaged the open sores. Dr. Rundström seemed to Ernst like a Faustian figure on the plains of Kansas as this large man, with the full-brown beard and bushy eyebrows, leaned over his bed. But as Ernst has written, "From that moment dates one of the dearest, most pleasant, friendships that I have ever had in my life."<sup>10</sup>

The relationship between Dr. Rundström, forty-seven, a native of Röstånga, Skåne, and Ernst Skarstedt, twenty-two, was meaningful for both men. Although Dr. Rundström served the community well professionally, he was isolated and really feared by many people. No one knew him well nor had anyone reputedly had a normal conversation with him. His wife had died several years earlier. Rundström was a mystic, and had a strange belief in extrasensory power. His ghost stories from northern Skåne enthralled and sometimes frightened young Skarstedt. The physician had great interest in hypnotism. He informed Ernst about cures that he had achieved through this technique. Once Skarstedt asked the doctor to hypnotize him. Rundström bent over the young immigrant, practicing the art in which he believed. The sensation was described as follows: "Before I knew it, I had a feeling as if I were becoming paralyzed and losing consciousness. Frightened by this symptom I struggled to come out of it and pleaded with him to cease the hypnotism. I am certain that I would have succumbed in a short time. I have often thought about that night on the Kansas prairie, when in the darkness I saw the bearded countenance of the doctor hovering over me as I began to lose consciousness."<sup>11</sup>

There were times when Ernst was lonesome for family and friends in Sweden. One April Sunday, he was alone almost all day since the Fallquists had gone to visit friends. He wrote that evening: "Oh, if I could step into Richter's bookstore and greet my friend Alfred. Think what a pleasant evening I could have in delightful Göteborg with Alfred, Conrad, Alexander Hall, Gustaf Rosenquist, and others. . . . But why complain, one eats what one cooks."<sup>12</sup>

Ernst had a variety of jobs while in the employ of Fallquist. He milked cows, fed horses, gathered eggs, dug post holes, set out young

trees, planted corn, husked corn, cleaned the barn, spread manure, helped build a bridge, dragged the road, and a variety of related duties. The job with Fallquist provided board and room plus ten dollars a month. Although this was relatively good compensation, Ernst realized that it would be almost impossible to save enough money to buy a farm. Fallquist understood the young man's ambition and was sympathetic with his desires. He suggested that he would seek an appointment for Ernst as a teacher in the school sponsored by the Bethany Lutheran congregation in Lindsborg, a position which would provide a salary of four hundred dollars a year. This was unacceptable to Ernst, because he did not wish to be under the jurisdiction of the leaders of this pietistic group. He described the relationship clearly:

On one occasion, Fallquist proposed that I ought to join the congregation, and at the outset, I was not indisposed to do so. But when he stated that I must submit myself to a kind of examination before the deacons, who had the right to deny my request, if they found my spiritual experiences and religious views were not in harmony with their ideas on these questions, I replied that I would never allow myself to be questioned by people whom I knew to have less intelligence and education than I.<sup>13</sup>

Ernst sensed the wide gulf between the *folk* church of Sweden and the concept of a *ren församling* (pure congregation) that was embraced at that time by the Lindsborg immigrants.

Ernst's response to the opportunity of teaching in Lindsborg is interesting because at this time he had inserted an announcement in *Svenska Tribunen* and *Gamla och Nya Hemlandet*, Chicago newspapers, that he was seeking a teaching position where he could also serve as organist and give music lessons. He specified, however, that he wished to find a position in an area where there were forests and lakes. Apparently he received no response to this announcement.<sup>14</sup>

Ernst made another attempt to seek employment commensurate with his interests and background. In the latter part of May, the following announcement was read at the morning worship service at Bethany Church: "If enough students express interest, the undersigned student from Sweden proposes to start a private school in Lindsborg with instruction in Swedish language, Latin, mathematics, natural science, and music. The cost will be 25 cents an hour, or if

several join together, 10 cents each per hour. Enrollment can take place at any time during the week at J. Swenson's hardware store. Those interested should indicate what subjects and the times per week they wish to have instruction. E. Skarstedt." C. J. E. Haterius, who was the acting pastor of the church, gave hearty endorsement to the proposed private school. The response, however, was negligible so the plan was dropped.<sup>15</sup>

The prospects for the future seemed more promising for Ernst when Dr. Rundström built and equipped a drugstore in Lindsborg. The young Swede helped him in stocking the shelves, labeling bottles, and similar tasks. The physician hoped that Skarstedt would like this employment since then he could operate the store for Rundström. Ernst left his job with Fallquist, although the latter offered to raise his salary to \$15 per month, and early in June he started his employment at the drugstore. He learned how to wash bottles, prepare tinctures and syrups, mark the bottles with letters from the Greek alphabet, and serve the few customers who patronized the place. But the prospect of permanent employment terminated suddenly. A druggist from Illinois, a Mr. Lindstrom, rented the drugstore from Rundström for three years at \$420 a year.<sup>16</sup>

Ernst decided to seek farm work again. He has written about this experience: "I placed my violin under one arm and a bundle of clothes under the other and wandered alone in a northwesterly direction. I felt indescribably lonesome. Came after sundown to Applequist's farm. He was away 'stacking.' Received supper. Three young farmers came with Applequist and his German hired hand. Played my violin to their great pleasure." A few days later, he found temporary employment during the wheat harvest on the Lindstrom brothers' farm six miles west of Lindsborg.<sup>17</sup>

The prospect of permanent employment soon was offered to Ernst Skarstedt. P. Sjöden, a carpenter, described by Skarstedt as "the most unusual man I have ever known," offered to hire him in his building projects. Since this involved soliciting jobs, Sjöden and Skarstedt traveled in the community in search of work. The results were disappointing since no building projects were found. However, the prospect seemed to have changed dramatically in June 1879, when a locomotive pulled a train of cars for the first time from Salina to Lindsborg on a branch line of the Kansas Pacific Railroad.

A building "boom" occurred in Lindsborg. But rumors immediately attracted forty carpenters, so that Ernst found no steady employment. Sjöden secured a few jobs on which Ernst worked as a carpenter's helper. The income was small and irregular. He slept on the hard floor in a room attached to the one rented by Sjöden. There was scarcely enough food to keep Ernst from suffering hunger. When the situation became desperate, he sought Dr. Rundström's farm where he was well fed and housed.<sup>18</sup>

There were some interesting episodes in the midst of economic uncertainty and the unpleasantness of a terribly hot and dry summer. When the Kansas Pacific train arrived at the Lindsborg depot from Salina the evening of July 25, Ernst was there to greet Dr. Josua Lindahl, his friend and former Lund teacher. He had come to Lindsborg in the company of Dr. T. N. Hasselquist, president of Augustana College and Theological Seminary, and the Reverend Carl A. Swensson, the new pastor of the Bethany Church. Ernst picked up Lindahl the next morning and rode with him to the country home of Dr. Rundström. The physician and Lindahl rode in a buggy, followed by Ernst on horseback, to the nearby bluffs where the day was spent in studying the geology, flora, and fauna of the area. Ernst was fully occupied collecting scorpions and other small animal life and in carrying rock specimens to the buggy. Later he was an intent listener as Lindahl described a recent scientific expedition to Greenland. Ernst was in the Bethany Church the next day when Hasselquist installed the talented Rev. Carl A. Swensson as pastor. Swensson, who became a great leader among Swedish Americans, founded Bethany College two years later.<sup>19</sup>

In September Ernst enjoyed a pleasant day as a guest in the home of Pastor Swensson. He played the organ and violin for appreciative family members and guests. He visited with Professor Olof Olsson, then a member of the faculty of Augustana College and Theological Seminary, and the founder of the Lindsborg community. Later Olof Olsson and Ernst traveled over the bumpy country road to Dr. Rundström's home where they visited with the colorful pioneer physician and ate grapes and melons grown on his farm. Olsson was an attentive viewer of Ernst's collection of art prints and photographs, a rather unusual possession for a young Swedish immigrant on the plains of Kansas. Ernst read to him from his

*Variana*, the manuscript collection of his favorite poetry and prose which he copied across the years. This was an interesting time for the sensitive and learned Olof Olsson, the eccentric and dramatic Dr. Rundström, and Ernst Skarstedt, the youthful former Lund student. A strange fate had brought these gifted men to the Smoky Valley of central Kansas from the idyllic parish of Sunnemo, Värmland, the beautiful village of Röstånga, Skåne, and the historic university town of Lund.<sup>20</sup>

Ernst, who was throughout his life an enthusiastic circus fan, rejoiced when Sells Brothers circus arrived in Lindsborg via the Kansas Pacific. The highlight was the parade down Main Street which included many wagons, seven elephants, eleven camels, and several other animals. When he attended the performance in the big tent, he saw a magician, a man who wrote with his feet, and an individual who was quite fully covered by a dozen snakes draped over his body. He enjoyed the antics of the clowns and the animal acts, especially the zebras from a distant continent. Sjöden and Ernst enjoyed two glasses of wine to climax a happy day.<sup>21</sup>

One day Ernst accompanied Dr. Rundström on a sick call to Marquette, ten miles west of Lindsborg. When people in Marquette learned that Ernst was the son of Professor C. W. Skarstedt, the Lund theologian, an attempt was made to persuade him to allow his name to be presented as a candidate for pastor of the Swedish Lutheran Church at Marquette, which, in a controversy, had split from the nearby Swedish Lutheran Church at Freemount. He immediately declined the unexpected invitation. Soon thereafter, Ernst was urged by Charles Strömquist, Freemount, an influential Swede in the Smoky Valley, to run on the ticket of the Republican party for the office of registrar of deeds of McPherson County. Strömquist proposed that if Skarstedt would only accompany him on a political tour to the large German-speaking Mennonite settlement in the southern part of the county, his election to a fairly lucrative position would be assured. Dr. Rundström also urged young Skarstedt to seek this office. Again Ernst declined. He preferred to eke out a living, at least for the time being, as a carpenter's helper and work at odd jobs for farmers in the area.<sup>22</sup>

Prospects for Ernst Skarstedt seemed brighter when a letter from Sweden brought him 1,000 kronor or \$259 as an inheritance

from his mother. His firm ambition while in Sweden, and subsequently, had been to own some land. Inquiry in the Lindsborg area about the cost of a farm indicated \$400 to \$600 would be required, an amount that was greater than his assets. He decided to explore the possibilities in more distant places. Dr. Rundström was interested in Florida. Rundström and he entered into a tentative partnership whereby they would purchase land and Rundström would pay Skarstedt for the labor he expended on it. On October 14 Skarstedt left Lindsborg for Florida, but he never got farther than Salina.<sup>23</sup>

The abortive trip was the result of two job offers. Druggist August Engstrom in Salina asked Ernst to assemble in book form a description of some new medicines that he had concocted. The offer of five dollars for this service was attractive to Ernst. The new medicines included chocolate-covered pills for worms in the human body, various Swedish herb medicines, and liver pills, of the type associated with Ayer, Jayne, Hostetter, and other Americans. There is no evidence that this first of many literary efforts by Ernst Skarstedt ever saw printers ink. Ernst also did some work on *Svenska Härolden*, the Swedish newspaper in Salina and he copied an old, dirty document, signed, "Palmer, 1801," for some Indians on their way to Washington to seek redress of grievances.<sup>24</sup>

On the day that Ernst was scheduled to buy his railroad ticket to Florida, he came down with a terrible fever. He decided to return to Lindsborg, and when he arrived there his teeth chattered with the fever and chills in his body and dizziness made it difficult to walk so that he could scarcely find the place where he had stayed. Ernst has described the situation:

I will never forget the ghastly time that followed. My condition became worse and worse. On the day after my arrival, there seemed to be fire in my veins. . . . My illness was typhoid-malarial fever, a mixture of nerve and ague fever. When the crisis was passed, I was confined to bed and drained of all my strength.<sup>25</sup>

When Ernst's health improved, he sought an interesting alternative by deciding to edit and publish a Swedish weekly newspaper in Lindsborg. He was joined in this enterprise by Emil Lundquist, a skilled printer on the staff of *Svenska Härolden* in Salina. They believed that with the assurance of \$500 annually in advertisements, the income from subscriptions, and their own modest capital,



consisting largely of Ernst's inheritance money from Sweden, the project would be successful. N. P. Swenson, a hardware merchant, was enthusiastic, and assured the publishers that he would provide \$100 in advertising. The \$500 goal in advertising was readily reached. The only person who argued that the plan was not feasible and that it was economically unsound was Pastor C. A. Swensson of the Bethany Lutheran Church.<sup>26</sup>

Skarstedt and Lundquist proceeded with their plans. A press, type, paper, and supplies were ordered from Chicago. The name of the new publication was *Kansas Stats-Tidning*. It was a four-page seven-column weekly, with a subscription price of \$1.50 a year. The first issue was printed in Salina at the office of the *Advocate* on Christmas Eve, 1879. In the first week of January 1880, the *Kansas Stats-Tidning* personnel moved to Lindsborg. The situation was described by Ernst: "Dr. Rundström came to Salina in the morning with buggy and mule team. I bought ½ pint of bayrum from Engström (druggist) for 35 cents which he blended together, the rascal, from several bottles. Lundquist, his wife, and children together with the tramp (Willis, a printer), rode with a lot of things in the wagon pulled by the mule team, I with the doctor. We went directly to Lindsborg. Terribly miserable in my nose, throat, and chest."<sup>27</sup>

Skarstedt and Lundquist rented three rooms in a building on Main Street, owned by a Mr. Rosen, for twelve dollars a month. These rooms served as print shop, office, and dwelling place for the Lundquists. Ernst slept on his seaman's chest and a chair in the office at the outset, but later he was permitted to sleep in the supposedly warmer drugstore owned by the Lindstrom brothers, where the counter served as a bed and a drug catalogue as a pillow. However, the cold was so intense on occasion that he could not move after the night's chill, with the result that the Lindstroms pummeled him with their fists to start circulation in his body. Moreover, there was scarcely enough money for the Lundquists and Ernst to buy food necessary to sustain life. There was an occasional diversion in the grim existence as recorded in Ernst's diary: "Lundquist and I with Lindstrom in the evening, had several drinks. Quite drunk. Went out in the evening about 11 and jumped and danced on the street. Met Amison at 1 o'clock. Later Lindstrom and I had some more drinks.

Went to bed completely exhausted.”<sup>28</sup>

Skarstedt's independent spirit soon aroused great opposition from the power structure. There were two distinct and antagonistic groups as Skarstedt viewed the Lindsborg scene. The older group of Swedish immigrants, who had the money and power, were determined to dominate. Another group was composed of so-called “Americans,” and the younger generation of Swedes. The power structure, under the leadership of C. R. Carlson, the most influential merchant, imported Titus O'Connor, an Irish policeman from Chicago, to maintain what this group considered to be law and order.

The younger element soon staged a demonstration in protest as described in Ernst's diary: “A group of young people rode in a wagon pulled by some of their friends and went up and down the street. Two of them sitting in the front seat played violins. All was done to annoy Carlson and Johnson and those who had hired the Irish policeman. Fälling and other *läsare* pietists were mad.” The demonstration was followed by an episode with serious consequences. O'Connor, for reasons unknown, ordered a couple who lived on the second story of Holm's building, to close the window and go to bed if they wished to avoid being arrested. A crowd gathered to protest the policeman's action, whereupon he pulled out two revolvers and pointed toward the crowd. Two bullets were shot into the crowd, one of them hitting J. Marsh. Two shots were fired at the Irishman. He ran, with the mob in hot pursuit, but escaped in the cover of darkness.<sup>29</sup>

Ernst's account of this development in *Kansas Stats-Tidning*, together with criticism of the town's power structure aroused animosity toward him. Moreover, he supported in the columns of *Kansas Stats-Tidning* the political opponents of the influential leaders in the township elections. Skarstedt's candidates were representatives of the Farmers' Party, who were viewed as dangerous radicals by the conservative section of the community. His candidates were also supported by the “Americans” in the area. The election was won by the new party much to the distress of those whose power had not been seriously challenged heretofore.<sup>30</sup>

Skarstedt had early occasion to witness what he viewed as hypocrisy in high places among devout people in Lindsborg. Although he was then, and subsequently, an avowed opponent of

prohibition laws governing the sale and use of alcoholic beverages, the situation in Lindsborg, as described by him in *Vagabond och Redaktor*, further fortified his condemnation of the leadership:

Naturally there was no saloon, but that was not the whole story. Druggists were even forbidden to sell patent medicines which contained alcohol in any form, such as "Hostetters Bitters," "Home Bitters," and "Dr. McClean's Cordial." About twice a week, sometimes more often, some of the city's wise fathers made the rounds of the drugstore, counting the bitters bottles on the patent medicine shelves, and if any bottle was missing, the druggist had to explain carefully what had happened to it.

Skarstedt reported that Dr. Curtis, who owned a drugstore, told him that he sold drinks on the Fourth of July from behind the counter at the rate of ten cents a drink to the amount of \$152. He observed further that alcohol could be purchased by paying a fee for a physician's certificate under the pretense of needing it for a sick cow or horse. Skarstedt concluded: "It was indeed amazing how many sick animals there were at that time among the pious people of Lindsborg."<sup>31</sup>

This combination of events, and the response of Skarstedt to them, doomed *Kansas Stats-Tidning* to a short and controversial life. He has described it as follows: "The bitterness of those in power, who now for the first time had been challenged, is easy to understand. The largest firm [Carlson and Johnson] took out their advertising immediately. Others threatened to do the same. We were condemned in correspondence to other newspapers. We were regarded as criminals. The money men and the rest of the so-called 'Christian' matadors looked upon us with complete contempt. The liberals were too few to support a newspaper. Many who wished to help us did not dare to do so for fear of offending the leading citizens. Under these circumstances, I decided I would no longer 'fight against the inevitable.' " Skarstedt made arrangements with *Svenska Amerikanaren* of Chicago to assume the subscription list of *Kansas Stats-Tidning*. The tenth and last number of the newspaper was published on February 25, 1880.<sup>32</sup>

Skarstedt's situation was again critical. He lived on an expenditure of five or ten cents for two or three days. When he became desperately hungry, he went reluctantly to friends in the country to share their willing hospitality. He owed nineteen dollars for meals at

the Lindsborg Hotel. He was sued by the hotel owner for this amount, and then to his amazement an additional forty dollars for food which the hotel owner's brother had eaten while working for *Kansas Stats-Tidning*. Ernst was able to borrow some money to make a settlement which he felt was unjust. Skarstedt's Lindsborg experiences had been full of sorrow. He wanted no more of the community.<sup>33</sup>

Since druggist F. G. Bökman in Marquette offered Ernst employment, the young former editor moved in March to Marquette, ten miles west of Lindsborg. He spent his nights in the drugstore sleeping on the counter. This was to him "a pleasant and happy month, the most pleasant that I had experienced since my arrival in America." A decisive factor was the cordial manner in which he was received. There was less piety but more integrity in Marquette as Skarstedt viewed the two communities. Anderson, the school teacher, said that the community needed exactly "a liberal, educated, republican-minded, young and energetic person like Skarstedt." Anderson was a great admirer of the Swedish poet, Tegnér, a point of view he had never heard in Lindsborg. Moreover, the pastor of the Marquette Lutheran Church, the Reverend Mauritz Stolpe, who later became a well-known poet and minister among Swedish Americans, was highly esteemed by Ernst for his tolerance and understanding. Ernst enjoyed also his fellowship with Stolpe as they shared occasional drinks.<sup>34</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's musical experience in Marquette was quite different from that in Lindsborg. When Ernst proposed to theological student C. J. E. Haterius, who was serving the Bethany Church in early April 1879, that the latter might accompany him on the organ as he [Ernst] played the violin at a church service, Haterius replied that "the prejudice against the violin is so great in the community that I do not dare to do it." Later that month, Ernst played several violin solos at the Marquette Lutheran Church, and, in addition, Pastor Stolpe played the organ as Ernst accompanied on the violin while two hymns were sung by the congregation.<sup>35</sup>

The employment that Skarstedt had accepted with druggist Bökman involved the translation of an American book on the medical care of horses for which he was to receive board and room, and ten dollars upon completion, with twenty-five dollars to be made

available later. His first literary endeavor as noted earlier was to assemble a book on medicine for druggist Engstrom in Salina. Skarstedt worked steadily at his new project of describing horse ailments and their cure, together with horse medicines that Bökman had developed. Moreover, he devoted time to translating into Swedish two lectures of Robert Ingersoll for which *Svenska Amerikanaren* in Chicago paid him ten dollars.<sup>36</sup>

Although Ernst spent most of the time in Marquette during this period, he made occasional visits to Lindsborg. Since he was a Lindsborg resident, he voted in the city election in April 1880, as recorded in his diary: "Voted for city officials. I voted for the white ticket against the red (temperance party) and for Dr. Day as mayor against Henry. Henry is undoubtedly a good man, but he is but a plaything in the hands of the partners (Carlson and Johnson)." Other activities during April are described by Ernst: "April 11. Headache. Took four drinks for it. Rode with Esq. Lindh to Kalmar (6 miles) for dinner. Drank on the way there, upon arrival, and later in the afternoon. With Bökman for a time at Renius' place (1 drink there). Played violin erratically but it wasn't noticed. Drank whiskey with Lindstrom tonight. Slept in attic. Vomited through the window. April 12. Felt ill but got a morning drink from Lindstrom at 7:30. Rode with Renius to Marquette. Ate no dinner or supper."<sup>37</sup>

Since the prospects for the future in the Lindsborg area seemed bleak, Ernst decided to move to Colorado. On April 25 he left Marquette to begin his trip to Denver and the Rocky Mountains. He stayed in Brookville, a cattle and railroad town about twenty miles northwest of Marquette on the Kansas Pacific, where he was a guest of his friend Reuterfeld, a druggist. The latter introduced Ernst to a retired railroad conductor who agreed to contact the conductor on the Denver train so that in return, for one and one-half dollars, he would be accepted as a passenger without purchasing a twenty dollar ticket.<sup>38</sup>

When the locomotive steamed up at the small Brookville railroad station for the long trip to Denver, Ernst Skarstedt found a place near the potbelly stove of the first coach as agreed upon with the conductor, and when tickets were collected, no notice was taken of him. Ernst invited the conductor to nip frequently from his two-pint whiskey bottle. The train moved along at a monotonous

pace. The scenery was desolate, consisting of endless flat prairie without any sign of vegetation except short buffalo grass. The traveler's attention was attracted occasionally to herds of antelope which glided across the wide landscape, and to numerous prairie dog villages, where this part of creation had adapted itself effectively to the exacting environment. When the train arrived at Wallace, Kansas, in the midst of the desolate prairie, Ernst left the coach because this was the end of the run for the cooperative conductor who was responsible for his free passage. The town consisted of the depot, a locomotive shed, a water tower, and seven or eight wood shacks. The landscape was "a veritable Sahara." The most striking site at Wallace was a huge pile of white buffalo bones which had been gathered from the surrounding plains for shipment to the East, symbol and fact of man's ravaging of nature through the indiscriminate slaughter of the herds of shaggy buffalo which for centuries had claimed this area as their sovereign domain.<sup>39</sup>

Since Ernst saw no possibility of boarding a freight train unseen in the flat terrain of Wallace, he decided to walk along the railroad tracks to the next station which was ten miles distant. But the terrific heat and the mounting weakness caused by lack of food produced severe headache so he abandoned the lonely trek. While resting, he took out his violin, and under the clear skies of the Kansas high plains and with the curious inhabitants of a nearby, well-populated prairie dog village as his attentive audience, the plaintive music of the violin was heard for the first time in this bizarre locale.<sup>40</sup>

Skarstedt decided to return immediately to Wallace, and when he approached the first building, a saloon, the owner stood at the door to greet him. When he saw Ernst's violin, he motioned to him, and invited him to play in the saloon, because several years had passed since he had heard a violin. In return for this impromptu performance, which was received with great applause, Ernst received three glasses of beer, a less welcome compensation than food. Ernst's musicianship attracted great attention and admiration when he sight-read some simple scores that the saloon owner placed before him. The proprietor's pride expanded noticeably when Ernst transcribed one of the scores in his ever present notebook. When time came for supper, the young traveler went to another building where he enjoyed a good meal which cost him twenty-five cents.

Some cowboys and railroad workers, who had heard him play the violin at the saloon, now called for a command performance at the cafe. Ernst responded with what was undoubtedly the first violin concert in Wallace, and perhaps for hundreds of miles around.<sup>41</sup>

When Skarstedt left the cafe about 9:30 P.M., he saw a long freight train being placed in readiness for departure westward. A cursory survey indicated that the boxcars were locked, defying thereby any attempt by him to enter. As he hid between two cars, a brakeman spotted him and after a brief conversation, the former suggested that if Ernst would give him \$3, he would aid him in entering an open boxcar. The money was soon given to the brakeman, and Skarstedt immediately entered a boxcar in full darkness. It was a startling discovery that other unknown persons were already sharing this kind of transportation. When dawn came after a night of tiresome jostling as the train moved westward, he found six fellow travelers in the car. They eyed the newcomer with uncertainty. Never in their experience on the rails had they encountered a hobo carrying a violin.<sup>42</sup>

As the boxcars rolled and bumped across the desolate expanse of prairie, Ernst Skarstedt had time to reflect: "The morning passed away with terrible tediousness and gave me the opportunity to make comparisons between the past and the present. It was May 1, the day of Spring and joy. I remembered how we observed this day with great festivities in Sweden. I thought about the happy student gatherings and the May carnivals that I had participated in so many times. How different from my present situation!" As the long train moved on with its slipping rails and noisy jolts, the landscape began to change. What Ernst saw as he looked out of the wide door pleased him:

I will never forget the scene which now met my eyes. The desolate, terrible, uninhabited, dried-up prairie was bounded on the west, not far from us, by a mighty ragged chain of mountains crowned with snow. These were the Rocky Mountains, with their snowy peaks, which stretched north and south as far as the eye could see. . . . I could scarcely cease to look at the enthralling view.<sup>43</sup>

When the train slowed up in approaching the Denver railroad station, Ernst's experienced fellow travelers in the boxcar jumped off. This technique could scarcely be used by the inexperienced immigrant youth who had known how to ride out a severe storm on

the North Sea, but who was a novice in riding American freight trains. Moreover, he was afraid to jump because of possible damage to his precious violin. The result was that when he left the boxcar, he was stopped by a special policeman, who brought him to a hearing before a railroad official in the station for riding illegally. When the special policeman confirmed to the officials that no damage had been done to the boxcar or its contents, young Skarstedt was dismissed with words of admonition to use other means of transportation.<sup>44</sup>

As young Skarstedt walked slowly from the railroad station in search of a place to live, he came by chance to a boarding house operated by a Swede named Okerström, where he arranged for board and room at \$5 per week. When he went to the post office to inquire about mail, he saw an official-looking man pick up several Swedish American newspapers. Ernst presented himself and found that the gentleman was the Royal Swedish Consul at Denver, Mr. Hedberg. Skarstedt later visited Consul Hedberg's office which was a small area in a saloon curtained off from the place where the bartenders served the thirsty customers. One of the most interesting people whom Skarstedt met in Denver was Captain Axel Silfversparre who, as the commander of the famous Silfversparre Battery in the American Civil War, had gained great fame. Silfversparre stayed at Okerströms. He had fallen upon precarious days financially, but the generous Okerström did not require that Silfversparre pay for board and room. Ernst and he often played duets on the violin and guitar. Silfversparre was a fine performer on the cello, but unfortunately the former Civil War hero's financial exigencies had required him to place his instrument in hock at a Denver pawn shop.<sup>45</sup>

Skarstedt's employment record in Denver presented a spotty pattern. Okerström, the owner of the boarding house, secured a job for him with a French truck gardener. This job involved washing, sorting, and preparing vegetables, especially horse-radishes, for market. Ernst and the Frenchman had a quarrel after one day's work, since Ernst unwisely insisted that he should begin his work one-half hour later than requested by his employer. He then applied for and received the assignment as second violinist in the orchestra at the Denver opera house where *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was performed, for which he was to be paid \$2 an evening. But his difficulty in reading the manuscript score caused him to give up that job after one



performance without collecting any compensation. On May 14, Captain Silfversparre arranged for Ernst to play violin at two Denver saloons. The collection at Borgström's saloon brought in \$2.50 and at Johnson's saloon the income was \$1.65 plus several glasses of beer.<sup>46</sup>

Ernst secured a job as a roustabout in the Denver railroad shops. This hard work required him to remove heavy chains and large wheels from boxcars and coaches. He bruised his fingers, cut his hands, and after strenuous lifting, he suffered from terrible headaches. One night he was in such severe pain that he cried out: "Isn't there a kind person who will come and shoot me?" Okerström came to ease the pain as best he could by applying vinegar and water to Ernst's forehead. Young Skarstedt then sought another job. He signed on as a laborer in the railroad station using a hand truck to move the heavy barrels, trunks, and boxes. The foreman was a cocky Englishman who sat on a barrel or box making sarcastic remarks to the workers such as, "You walk as if you are losing your pants," "You forgot to wash your face today," "You have certainly eaten too much for breakfast." Ernst, who was of slight build, was trying to do the strenuous work that was being done by men twice as heavy as he. At noon one day he walked off the job without getting his pay for that week. He preferred to do it that way rather than take the abuse from the foreman for having allowed a whiskey barrel to roll off his truck, smashing its staves with the result that the precious liquid flowed in little glistening rivulets on the station platform.<sup>47</sup>

In the background of frustrating experiences in Denver and after many months of strenuous but unproductive life in America, Ernst Skarstedt took an inventory of his American experience and financial status. The inventory showed many varied developments but little in the form of money. He had known the severe cold of northern Minnesota and the intense heat of central Kansas. His farm labor had been exacting and at times dangerous. His job as a carpenter's helper had been sporadic and largely unproductive. His contacts with people generally had been disappointing, but his friendship with the interesting physician, Dr. John Rundström, and the Reverend Mauritz Stolpe had been meaningful. His earnings beyond board and room for the nine-month period had been seventy dollars, although some of this had been expended on food and lodging. He had slept in a shoemaker's shop, in attics, on the ground

under the stars. He had shared in the excesses of too much food and drink and then again, he had been hungry. He was offered job opportunities in teaching, preaching, and public service, but the traits in him which fashioned the Ernst Skarstedt that was to be had caused him to reject these opportunities. Although he had played his violin on several occasions, his contact with books had been quite limited, except when working on the Lindström brothers' farm west of Lindsborg where he had received as partial compensation several volumes by Jules Verne which he found stuck away out of sight in an attic.

Skarstedt's recent experiences now called for action. In March he had received an invitation from Nils Anderson, the publisher of the *Svenska Amerikanaren*, to become a member of the editorial staff of that well-known Swedish language newspaper in Chicago. The offer was renewed. For more than a year and a half, as Ernst wrote, "I had scarcely succeeded in keeping body and soul together. Since the only way by which I could get out of this miserable position was to accept Mr. Anderson's offer, I wrote to him that I would come. I left Denver as well as the up-to-now dog's life immediately." When Ernst left Denver in June 1880, to join the staff of *Svenska Amerikanaren* in Chicago, a new life began for him.<sup>48</sup>

## V

# THE CHICAGO YEARS

Ernst Skarstedt began his Chicago years on June 12, 1880. The genial owner of *Svenska Amerikanaren*, Nils Anderson, was delighted to have this promising young man on the staff. The newspaper had experienced some problems since the early days of its origin in 1866. Herman Roos, the second editor, and his successor, Magnus Elmlblad, had gone beyond the usual norms of an independent, liberal newspaper for Swedish Americans. Their life styles had established a tone in *Svenska Amerikanaren* that was not acceptable to many readers. Ernst Skarstedt's journalistic experience had been limited, although the abortive editing and publication of *Kansas Stats-Tidning*, in 1879-1880, at Lindsborg, Kansas, had demonstrated his potential literary qualities. Moreover, he had contributed about half a dozen articles to *Svenska Amerikanaren* as well as having translated some lectures of Robert Ingersoll. These contributions had convinced Anderson that young Skarstedt had great promise.<sup>1</sup>

The proposed and the actual assignment at the Chicago newspaper differed greatly. Anderson had outlined Skarstedt's duties to include primarily the news section, clipping articles from Swedish papers, and translating materials from English to Swedish. The editor, Magnus Elmlblad, was one of the finest poets among Swedish Americans, an excellent writer, a genius-like person, but one who completely lacked self-discipline. He was also unable to withstand the claims and difficulties caused by "daemon rum." The result was

that Ernst Skarstedt became responsible from the outset for planning the editorial page, a pattern that continued as long as Elmblad was associated with the newspaper. The nominal editor produced excellent articles when he was in a sober condition, but one of Skarstedt's anxieties was to prevent the printing of items which Elmblad sent to the print shop when he was in an irresponsible condition. Elmblad came to the office of the newspaper with varying degrees of civility. When his spirits were good, Skarstedt enjoyed fine fellowship with him, although on some occasions, he was extremely abusive. At other times, Elmblad was most amusing, asking Ernst if he was "the apostle Peter or possibly, Paul," while Elmblad viewed himself as being archangel Michael. Skarstedt has written, "to the same degree that Elmblad was magnificent as a poet, he was impossible as a person."<sup>2</sup>

What is more important for this study than the career of Elmblad was the attitude of Skarstedt toward him. He has written in relation to the life of Elmblad: "Cold, calculating, ordinary people, especially those who imagine themselves to be models of virtue, look down with contempt on one who doesn't live a normal life and who fails to conform to the community's customs and conventions as they do themselves. They do not realize that genius and mediocrity cannot be measured by the same yardstick." This deep feeling, especially for those who seemed to some to be in a difficult situation, was to become a mark of identification for Ernst Skarstedt. He endured much inconvenience, expense, and even hardship in his persistent attempts to extend the hand of friendship to Magnus Elmblad. He did so because Ernst Skarstedt could not do otherwise.<sup>3</sup>

Nils Anderson, the publisher of *Svenska Amerikanaren*, often suggested that Skarstedt should be listed as editor rather than Elmblad since the former was doing the work of an editor. Skarstedt declined the proposal because he did not wish to offend Elmblad. Moreover, he did not wish to offend further his father. Professor Skarstedt objected strenuously to Ernst's newspaper career. He was especially opposed to his service with the liberal, secular-minded *Svenska Amerikanaren*, and the life associated with it. The father's attitude was expressed effectively in a poem of twenty-nine stanzas which appeared in the religious periodical *Augustana och Missionären* in November 1880. The poem was based upon an ancient tradition

that the Apostle John in his old age had saved a beloved foster son by the name of Teofil from a robber band which he had joined in his care-free youth. The poem had been sent by Professor Skarstedt to Dr. Josua Lindahl, Ernst's former teacher and friend. The intent was quite clear. Dr. Lindahl was to be like the Apostle John, and his mission was to save Ernst, whose middle name was Teofil, from his associates in the world of journalism, who, from the father's point of view, could be compared with the bad companions in the robber band with whom the legendary Teofil had chosen to spend his life. It was quite apparent that Ernst's journalistic life displeased his father. The fact that Ernst sharply answered his father on this issue in both poetry and prose was hardly a healing gesture.<sup>4</sup>

The source of Professor Skarstedt's concern about the life of Ernst in Chicago is not known nor is the specific nature of his anxiety about his son's activities revealed. Most likely the father did not know the extent of some of Ernst's activities. His excessive drinking resulted in episodes that are not pleasant to chronicle, but, unlike Magnus Elmlad, he had no confrontations with the law. In August 1880, Ernst's diary records his condition, when he was aroused from his drunken sleep in an alley by a nightwatchman making his rounds with a lantern. Patronizing a place on State Street known as "*Lilla Tältet*" (the Little Tent) which was operated by a Captain Rounds, an old, gray-haired man, was also part of the fabric of the life of Ernst and his friends. He wrote later that "this place was hardly respectable."<sup>5</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt shared life with many friends and companions of different types during the Chicago years, although all of them were members of the Swedish or Norwegian community. They were F. A. Lindstrand, at that time a watchmaker, later known as "*Onkel Ola*," a successful editor and publisher; Fritz Schultz, a jolly merchant and pleasant companion; and Marcus Thrane, a Norwegian socialist and champion of freedom. He met John Enander, the editor of *Hemlandet*, and one of the best known Swedes in America, but, at that time, he seemed "very reserved and high-and-mighty" to Skarstedt. There was Emanuel Cassel, a successful merchant, who came destitute to Chicago. Cassel later studied books on medicine, passed an examination and accepted a position as a physician in Princeton, Illinois, becoming a successful physician. None of them

were as unusual or as gifted as Magnus Elmlblad. In July 1884, Elmlblad returned to Sweden. Thus, an unusual friendship between two unique spirits came to an end. In a resignation note, Elmlblad had written: "Thanks and farewell to the readers of *Svenska Amerikanaren*. It is to be hoped that Prof. Skarstedt, who will edit the paper after my departure, will guide its course in such a manner that the old skipper, Herman Roos, will not turn in his grave except with a feeling of great pleasure."<sup>6</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's life changed decisively with his marriage in Chicago to Anna Hult, the daughter of a blacksmith, G. M. Hult, and his wife of Stora Foss, Bohuslän, Sweden. Young Ernst had met Anna, it will be recalled, while he was serving as a tutor for the children of Count and Countess Trampe at Mjölkeröd. Ernst's diary records the developments before his departure for America in December 1878:

December 8. Deep snow. Went to Sannäs to go with Anna to church . . . Fredberg who met us said that Anna was the most beautiful girl he had seen in Bohuslän. On the way home from church I asked Anna to call me "Ernst" and not "Mr. Skarstedt." In speaking about my trip to America I said: "If I court Anna, would Anna follow me to America?" She looked at me and said: "You don't really mean it. You do not realize what you are saying." When I replied: "Yes, I know what I am saying," and when I asked again what her answer would be if I courted her, she said: "I will tell you another time."<sup>7</sup>

The entry in the diary two days later describes the next development: "Anna and I went for a walk in the clearest moonshine. I took her by the hand and thanked her for accepting my invitation to courtship. I told her she was the first girl I had really liked and that I would go further than Fredberg, who had said she was the prettiest girl in Bohuslän. I said she was the prettiest girl in Sweden. After walking a little more, I said: 'Anna, we are half-way engaged.' She replied: 'Yes, almost.' We now said 'Du' to each other" ("Du" is more intimate for "you" than the more formal word "Ni"). The final entry dealing with Anna at this time was on December 11. "Anna followed me to the bridge where we said goodbye. I only patted Anna on her shoulders, I would have liked to kiss her, but that must remain for another time if the Lord permits us to meet again on earth."<sup>8</sup>

Although most of the facts in the relationship of Anna and

Ernst are hidden in the silence of incomplete evidence, the diary of Ernst discloses that Anna was scheduled to leave Göteborg for America on June 3, 1881. On June 28 Ernst recorded: "8 A.M. at the Rock Island railroad station [Chicago] to meet Anna. Left there at 9:30 A.M. to go to the Inman office, where Anna was (she had arrived at 5:30 A.M.). We kissed for the first time." Ernst and Anna were married in Chicago on July 23, 1881, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Emil Lundquist, his old Kansas friends, by the Reverend John Hedman, pastor of the St. Ansgar Episcopal congregation, tracing its origin to Gustaf Unonius. Ernst had expected that the wedding ceremony would be performed by a justice of the peace, but Anna insisted that it be a religious ceremony. Since it was necessary to use a ring in the order of service, Ernst wrote in his memoirs that he "purchased for the occasion a ring for five cents, which I threw in a dark hole immediately after the ceremony. I have never been able to tolerate jewelry, ornaments, or display of any kind. Just the sight of such things arouses disgust in me."<sup>9</sup>

Anna and Ernst received many good wishes at the time of the wedding and later. But there was no word of congratulations from Ernst's father. Ernst explained this lack of feeling by stating that his father was a theologian, and it reminded him of what a farmer in Skåne had said about a sermon in Lund by Professor Olbers which contained much Latin and Greek as well as incomprehensible concepts: "The professor was indeed a learned man but terribly weak in his knowledge of Christianity." Then Ernst added: "That farmer saw what few theologians perceive; that theology and Christianity are not the same."<sup>10</sup>

In an unusual action, but in keeping with Skarstedt's often unusual behavior, he left the day after the wedding with a group of Scandinavian journalists on a promotional trip to the Red River area of Minnesota and Manitoba under the leadership of A. E. Johnson, who was an emigration commissioner for railroads. Among the twenty-five persons on the trip were Marcus Thrane and Colonel Hans Mattson of Civil War fame. When Ernst returned to Chicago on August 9, Anna and he rented a little house with two rooms and kitchen for \$9 per month at 29 Burlington Street. About \$100 of their \$200 capital was spent for furniture and kitchen equipment. Two children were born in the little house, Esther, on July 2, 1882,

and Marcus, April 8, 1884, named after Marcus Thrane. In November 1884, the Skarstedts bought a one-room house in Wilmette, Illinois, where they lived for a few months until they moved to Washington Territory.<sup>11</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt had lived and worked in a journalistic atmosphere with people who enjoyed beer and whiskey regularly and often to excess. There is scarcely a day in his diary during this period when he does not record being treated or having treated friends and acquaintances to drinks and still more drinks. September 20, 1881, was a bad day for Ernst as recorded in his diary: "A saloon keeper, Johnson, from Moline treated with several drinks, and Carlson did likewise. Carlson and I became drunk. Pulled Nils Anderson to Brennans where we had more drinks. I went home drunk about 9 P.M. Anna took care of me and undressed me. I was terribly sick and in a disgraceful condition that had to be cleaned up."

The consequences of the experience were also described:

September 21, I awakened at 6 A.M. with the lamp still burning. Anna had stayed up until 2 A.M. and thought I was deadly ill, and was seeking help. Anna had written a note: "What will the future be? Am I born to suffer?" No, you dear wife. You at least will never have another night like this last night. At least I will with the greatest determination seek honestly to carry out that promise. You will see: This will never happen again.<sup>12</sup>

The most welcome visitor at the home of the Skarstedts was Marcus Thrane. He had been imprisoned for several years in Norway because of his republican sentiments, for his efforts to introduce popular voting, and because of his attacks on the clergy, the church, and the establishment. Thrane was an intelligent and active socialist. Skarstedt has written about him.

There was no breeziness or loudness in Thrane, no boasting or showmanship. . . . In spite of his radicalism there was something so truly kindhearted, so benevolent, so naive, and so amiable in his entire personality, that one saw in him the model of a truly humble and noble person. He was simple and unassuming in manner and dress, quick, and humorous in conversation, always friendly, pleasant, and happy.

Skarstedt further observed that, "Thrane was originally a warm advocate of the republican form of government but lost his faith in the same measure as he saw European ostentation creep in and push



out republican simplicity in America. It was principally indignation over the snobbery and hardheartedness of the rich which caused him to praise socialism and even anarchism." Thrane visited Skarstedt's home generally once a week, sometimes oftener, and, "It was during these unforgettable visits that Anna and I attached ourselves more and more to him and learned to regard him as a fatherly advisor and friend."<sup>13</sup>

Family life often involves times of uncertainty when illness comes to parents and children. The year 1883 was a difficult one for the Skarstedts. In July Esther became seriously ill with cholera and the parents were afraid she might die. Anna was also ill for long periods in 1883 with severe headaches, backaches, and other ailments. One physician diagnosed her condition as one which required surgery, but her generally weak condition made it necessary to delay that until she regained her strength. After the birth of the Skarstedt's second child in April 1884, Anna's condition worsened.

Ernst recalled having met Dr. Christian Gronvald who had a small hospital in Norway, Goodhue County, Minnesota. On July 25, the family left for Minnesota. Ernst soon returned to Chicago, although Anna and the children remained. He was confident the fresh air and rest in the country would be helpful to Anna. Following a six-week stay in Minnesota, she, and the children, returned to Chicago, having made a remarkable recovery. When Ernst reflected on the illness in the family, he concluded that they had taken too much medicine. His inventory showed that during the first two years of their married life Anna had used eleven kinds of medicine, Ernst seven types, and little Esther had had four prescriptions. His later aversion to medicine may be traced, rightly or wrongly, to the family's experience in Chicago.<sup>14</sup>

Although Ernst Skarstedt worked hard on his assignment with *Svenska Amerikanaren*, there were times when he became disenchanted with the present and disturbed about prospects for the future. Nils Anderson, the publisher, became increasingly irritable and difficult to satisfy. He had a running feud with C. G. Linderborg, the publisher of rival *Svenska Tribunen* in Chicago. Anderson never referred to Linderborg without using the words "tramp" or "scamp." He refused to allow his employees to have any relationships with the *Tribunen* personnel. Anderson abused Skarstedt one day for

allegedly associating with his enemies and speaking critically of him. This simply was not true. The relationship between Anderson and Skarstedt deteriorated. The latter said that he, as a result of the controversy, became increasingly "irritable, suspicious, and indifferent." In April 1884, Anderson stated that it was necessary for him to curtail expenses, and that there would be no place on the staff for Skarstedt. When Anderson suggested that it might be announced that Skarstedt had resigned, the latter declared: "That I will not do. We are going to be honest. I had surely planned to leave the paper some day, but since this had occurred, nothing must be said but that I was dismissed." One factor in the developments may have been related to an article which Skarstedt had written, "Does the Swedish Royal Family Consist of Idiots?"

In a little more than two months after Ernst's departure, Anderson sold *Svenska Amerikanaren*. Skarstedt met Anderson two years later in Chicago. Anderson told him then that someone had lied to him about Skarstedt and the latter observed: "I felt that I had gotten all the redress I could ask and I never gave anymore thought to the matter."<sup>15</sup>

When Ernst Skarstedt left the editorial staff of *Svenska Amerikanaren*, he took on the assignment as an agent to secure subscriptions for the newspaper as well as the sale of books. This decision resulted from a natural restlessness and the desire to explore other areas with a view to acquiring a farm. A consistent element in Skarstedt's career was the desire to own land and to be a farmer. The expedition, which started early in June, brought him to Cameron, Bucklin, and Kansas City, Missouri, and to Topeka and Lindsborg, Kansas. The journey was unproductive in the sale of subscriptions as well as in finding a place to live. He returned to Chicago after four weeks of travel, during which he had covered 1,776 miles by train and earned \$4.15 above expenses on the sale of books and newspapers.<sup>16</sup>

The wheel of fortune changed rapidly for Ernst Skarstedt. On the day of his return to Chicago, he accepted an editorial position with *Svenska Tribunen* in Chicago. The publishers, C. G. Linderborg and Andrew Chaiser, had assembled an excellent staff including C. F. Peterson, C. A. Mellander, and Waldemar Torsell. Peterson, who used the pseudonym, "Jefte," was a Republican, but later became a

Democrat, then a Populist and later a Single-taxer. He was greatly devoted to astrology and spiritualism. Mellander was a quiet, effective person who was a faithful and able colleague. Torsell was one of the most original men in the Swedish American press. He was an able and well-informed critic, with a unique sense of humor. Linderborg, the publisher, was a congenial and competent organizer, who had superb relations with his colleagues. Chaiser, Linderborg's associate, was also a fine person. Skarstedt has written that two more liberal and humane publishers and employers would be difficult to find. When Peterson left the staff, Skarstedt was given greater responsibility in the editorial position. Moreover, he was given complete freedom to express his views on any subject that he chose.<sup>17</sup>

Skarstedt's service on *Svenska Tribunen* was a happy time professionally. Only on one occasion, when Skarstedt wrote critically about Blaine and the Republican party, did strife occur. Linderborg then threw a dictionary at Skarstedt. Some fisticuffs followed, but reconciliation soon took place. Linderborg had an obsession that if the Democrats were elected to leadership the country would be ruined.<sup>18</sup>

Skarstedt's salary was boosted periodically by substantial increases. But Ernst Skarstedt was restless. Moreover, Anna's health was not good. The few weeks stay in the country in Goodhue County had been most helpful. This fact was important also as Skarstedt read accounts in letters from Peter Onsdorff about the glories of Washington Territory. Ernst decided that the time had come for leaving Chicago. When he informed Linderborg and Chaiser of his plans, they offered him a leave-of-absence with full pay for five months if he returned to their employment, and half of his salary if after five months he decided to stay in Washington. He rejected this liberal offer explaining, "I did not in any way wish to become beholden in a debt of gratitude which I could never discharge but instead I affirmed my desire to go completely independent."<sup>19</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's activity as a journalist during the Chicago years was directed principally to planning and arranging the contents of the newspaper. In the period of almost five years, he published only slightly more than one hundred articles. The majority were book reviews, reports on local meetings and activities, travelogues,

and replies to correspondents. He considered in his editorials topics which contrasted a republic with monarchy, the nature of immigration, hypocrisy in religion, and the intolerance of theologians.

Ernst was a severe critic of monarchy. He was confident that the republican form of government was far superior to the tradition-bound and aristocratic-dominated alternative of royalty. He was bitter in his attack upon the Swedish royal family in his editorial, in *Svenska Amerikanaren*, entitled, "Does the Swedish Royal Family Consist of Idiots?" Skarstedt was involved in theological controversy with *Augustana och Missionären*, a publication of the Swedish Lutheran Augustana Synod. His support of the views of the Reverend Heber Newton on the nature of the inspiration of the Bible became a big issue. He advocated a liberal rather than a literal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. The charge by the church periodical that Newton's preaching made "a Babel out of the Bible," was completely rejected by him. He contended that the basic issue was between *odium theologicum* with its dogmatic views and the more intelligent interpretation of Newton which emphasized Christian love and freedom.<sup>20</sup>

## VI

# AN INTERLUDE

When Ernst and Anna Skarstedt had made the decision to move to Washington Territory, furniture was sold, books and personal belongings were packed, and final arrangements were completed. The total resources of the Skarstedts was \$850 in addition to the one-room house and lot at Wilmette valued at \$450, which they hoped to sell. On March 11, 1885, Anna, Ernst, Esther, and Marcus left Chicago for Portland, Oregon. The cost of the railroad ticket was \$103. At St. Paul, where they changed trains, the box containing some of Ernst's books was broken, but it was soon repaired at his expense. When the train went through an area in western Minnesota that had many prairie-dog villages, Skarstedt observed that several blood-thirsty passengers shot many times at the peaceful little animals, but fortunately without any apparent success. After viewing indescribably beautiful scenery in the mountains and valleys of Idaho, they arrived in Washington Territory, with its fresh greenness and beautiful flowers, on the fourth day of the journey. The next morning, March 16, 1885, they came to Portland, after a 2,320-mile journey from Chicago.<sup>1</sup>

Portland was their first destination since this was the best approach to Vancouver, Battle Ground, and Mount Bell their final destination, all in Washington Territory. After leaving the family at the International Hotel in Portland, Ernst went by boat the eighteen miles from Portland to Vancouver, where he contacted Joe Wooden,

"an old, crabby creature who had the appearance of a patriarch." Wooden brought the mail regularly to Battle Ground fifteen miles distant. The steep grade and the poor conditions of the road required six hours to traverse fifteen miles. Although the wagon almost jolted Ernst out of the seat as it hit mud-holes, rocks, and branches of trees, he was soon enthralled with what he saw:

Nature was as beautiful as it was wild. There seemed to be endless forest except for occasional small open spaces, called in the locality, prairies, even if they weren't larger than an acre. The meadows were green and covered with flowers, the air was mild and filled with the fragrance of the spruce forest. . . . I felt new life coursing through my veins and I felt like singing at full voice with the birds around me at the thought that once again I could refresh my restless spirit with nature's unfailing balm.<sup>2</sup>

When Ernst reached Battle Ground, he found Peter Onsdorff, the man who was responsible for the Skarstedt's expedition to Washington Territory. Onsdorff was about Ernst's age, "six feet tall, sinewy, muscular, and with the appearance of irrepressible energy in his entire appearance." Although it was late in the afternoon, they started on foot the ten-mile journey over a tortuous road to Mount Bell. The path was so steep at many places that Ernst rolled backwards in trying to make progress forward. After four hours of continuous striving, they reached the top. In the middle of the night, they came to John Bell's cabin. The family was asleep, but, after they were aroused, Skarstedt and Onsdorff were given a place to sleep in the barn. The next day Skarstedt and Onsdorff reached the place that the latter had suggested for a homestead site. Ernst soon abandoned this site as a place of settlement. The open space was too small. The forest area consisted of a mass of trees 200-250 feet high which could not be cleared except through excessive labor and cost. Moreover, not even a path led to the place. Skarstedt felt that another location must be sought for settlement.<sup>3</sup>

Although Ernst Skarstedt was not ready to settle permanently in the Mount Bell area, he made arrangements with Peter Onsdorff to use his cabin for the next several months while exploring possibilities. Wooden agreed to provide transportation for the Skarstedts and their possessions. The first stop on the journey was at Bell's residence along Salmon Creek, twelve miles from Vancouver. The journey up Mount Bell started the next morning. Ernst carried young Marcus

while Anna and Esther sat in a wagon that was pulled by Bell's two oxen. The animals stopped every three or four minutes in order to avoid overstrain from the exacting demands of the steep grade. Bell then hurried to place a rock or a branch of a tree under a wheel to keep the vehicle from sliding down the hill. Two days later, they moved into Peter Onsdorff's cabin. This was an unfinished wood building twenty feet long and sixteen feet wide. Wide cracks between the boards let rain and wind inside. Ferns grew through the cracks in the floor of the one room structure. The only furniture was a rough table, a bench, a shelf for utensils, and a large cook stove. The door could not be closed. At night a trunk was placed in front of the door. Onsdorff's place included a fine open meadow of seven to eight acres, part of which was fenced with logs fastened to other heavy logs. Two or three acres were planted with oats. Twenty-five fruit trees were flowering. Anna and Ernst were enthusiastic about the land and surroundings. They offered Onsdorff \$400 for the property, but he declined to sell it.<sup>4</sup>

The Skarstedts decided, nevertheless, to accept Onsdorff's offer to spend the summer in his cabin. When Ernst returned one day with a cow and calf for which he paid \$45, tears came to Anna's eyes as she contemplated this enrichment of their resources. Ernst had great difficulties in learning to milk the cow. However, in June, he observed: "I milked today. Can do this art quite well now." They lived primarily on milk, bread, pancakes, and wild berries, except when Skarstedt shot a pheasant, rabbit, or grouse. There were deer, bears, and cougars in the area. Ernst was delighted with their new life:

It was like coming into another world. The fresh air and the constant outdoor life and the simple way of living seemed as though it worked miracles. A short time after moving to Onsdorff's cabin, we were so healthy that it seemed as we had never known what it was to feel badly. I remember how astonished we were over this fast transformation, and how it became more and more clear that it was our foolish way of living in the city, eating much meat, drinking coffee, a sedentary life, and a childish trust in medicine that had caused us previous trouble.<sup>5</sup>

In May, the rains came. The clouds billowed into the area like a heavy fog that could not be penetrated with human eyes. The first three weeks in June provided only five rainless days. The days

were so dark that it was impossible to read except by a window. The Skarstedts had no lamps so it was necessary to retire early. Some mornings were occupied by long walks in the beautiful mountain scenery and in observing the creativeness of nature. When, in June, Ernst climbed a mountain, he recorded that it took one hour and 3,700 steps going up while the return journey was made in twenty-five minutes with 2,800 steps. In the afternoons, Ernst played the violin and read to Anna. He also wrote articles about their experiences in the forest for *Svenska Tribunen*, Chicago. Several poems were written. He also translated two novels from English to Swedish for the newspaper. His compensation was \$30 for these manuscripts and translations.<sup>6</sup>

Ernst made trips to Battle Ground every two or three weeks to purchase necessary food and other items and to pick up the mail. Since their trunks and boxes were stored at Vancouver, he went there to fetch clothing, personal items, and especially books. When he had a heavy load one day in July, he used Bell's ox team. This was quite an undertaking for the inexperienced Swedish immigrant whose knowledge of oxen was nil. When it was necessary on one occasion to stop for a gate that blocked their passage, the oxen became impatient and walked with their load through brush to good pasture. It was necessary for Ernst to cut a new path through the thickets so that the oxen and their cargo could continue the journey.<sup>7</sup>

The Skarstedts had only occasional contact with other humans. Bell was cordial and offered to bring a sack of flour from Battle Ground. Skarstedt paid him \$1.25 for a sack of good flour, but when he opened what Bell had brought, he was chagrined to observe that only some sweepings from the mill had been provided. Then he observed: "The unusual degree of moral cowardice, which is one of my characteristics, forbade me to act as if I had discovered this deceit, but I decided to have nothing more to do with him. I could not help but feel sorry for him, since he had a hard time financially, and I was always friendly when we met." Peter Onsdorff visited occasionally. He was a very intelligent and well-read person with whom Skarstedt enjoyed conversing. On July 4 a group of men, women, and children came to celebrate the day with a picnic under the big tree on Turnbull's claim, where the Skarstedts joined them. The Skarstedts lived in relative isolation, but they loved this way of



life. The expenses for their simple way of life for five months on Mount Bell were \$75.<sup>8</sup>

As the days grew shorter and the feel of autumn came in the air, the inevitable prelude to winter, the Skarstedts decided to leave Mount Bell. When their few belongings were loaded on a wagon supplied by Wooden, on September 3, and the journey down the mountain started, a turning point in their lives had been reached. Ernst has described the situation: "I brooded day and night over one plan or another, until finally I came upon the idea that we ought to travel to Sweden and ask my father for money so that we could buy a farm. For a couple of thousand dollars we could buy a little farm and home that would be adequate for our simple needs." After a tour which brought Ernst to Tacoma and Seattle while the family stayed in Portland, the Skarstedts left that city for Chicago on September 16. Two weeks were spent visiting friends there and trying in vain to sell the small house and lot in Wilmette.<sup>9</sup>

The decision to go to Sweden had been reached in the midst of careful weighing of alternatives. The background factors are described by Skarstedt: "Anna considered my plan to buy a farm as reasonable, but she doubted that we should gain anything by a trip to Sweden or that we would even be welcome. 'You have made your father angry,' she said, 'both by your newspaper career and your marriage. If you feel that it is necessary to go there, do so, but let me stay here.' Practical and clear-sighted as she was, she understood the situation better than I. However, in spite of much reflection I saw no other solution." Then Ernst recounts the problems:

I had offended my father, that was true. I had abandoned university studies against my father's wish, since I had neither a calling or an interest in them; I had refused to see in myself a talent that was not there; I had shown open contempt for upper class refinement and I had defied all rules of etiquette; I had become engaged and I had emigrated without my father's consent and in general I had gone my own way. But I was now sorry that I had not been more considerate and I longed for reconciliation. Moreover, I was successful in convincing Anna to go along with these plans. But we would come unannounced, we would not write, but suddenly appear in Sweden. Our visit would be a shock.<sup>10</sup>

The plan to go to Sweden was not a spur-of-a-moment decision as is apparent from the evidence. There was a division among

Skarstedt's friends on this subject. Dr. John Rundström, his old Kansas friend, said to him: "Listen to your wife and stay in the woods. Buy land or secure a homestead, build a little log house and live in your own home. Believe me, you will not stay in Sweden many days. And to spend all you have on a trip is sheer folly." Skarstedt stated that Marcus Thrane and Dr. Josua Lindahl were favorable. Dr. Lindahl, his old friend and adviser from Lund days, was quite enthusiastic about the plans: "Your decision to travel to Sweden pleases me especially because it seems to imply a happy change in your former disposition. You say yourself that you are now another person. I have long waited for this change and I have never doubted that it would come as soon as you left your work in Chicago. Welcome back next spring."<sup>11</sup>

After a brief stay in Chicago, the Skarstedts left New York from dock forty-five on the S. S. *Germanic* for Liverpool on October 8, on a ticket that placed them in uncomfortable and crowded quarters with hundreds of steerage passengers. The ten-day voyage provided only one clear day amid storms, rain, and recurring seasickness. Their quarters were so crowded and foul from lack of ventilation and the presence of sick people that they spent most of the time, day and night, on the deck, although they were wet and cold. Anna declared that she would rather starve the rest of her life in Sweden than make a return trip. After resting five days in Liverpool, they went by rail to Hull, and then boarded the S. S. *Orlando*, arriving in Göteborg, October 26, 1885.<sup>12</sup>

The first three weeks in Sweden were spent in Göteborg and Bohuslän. Anna's sister Sophia and her brother Gustaf received the American visitors cordially in Göteborg. The Skarstedts also visited Ernst's maternal grandmother, the widow of Dr. Peter Wieselgren, and his uncle, *Kyrkoherde* Magnus Wieselgren. The Skarstedt family spent a few days at Uddevala with Anna's brother Ferdinand and her sister Mrs. Djurson. More than a week passed happily at Stora Foss with Anna's mother, her sister Amanda, and her brother Axel. Anna and Ernst were present at the wedding of Axel and Selma Mattson. In the middle of November, the Skarstedts went from Göteborg to Stockholm where they visited Anna's two sisters, Marie and Mrs. Johansson. Stockholm was also the residence of Ernst's uncle Harald Wieselgren, *Prostinnan* Westdahl, his stepmother's

mother, and other relatives and friends. Mrs. Westdahl received them as her own children. *Lektor* Elmlblad, the father of Magnus Elmlblad, and Pastor B. Wadström, who was well-known as an editor and diarist, greeted them with great cordiality and friendliness. Skarstedt observed: "We were invited here and there, and in the company of these kind people we forgot the unpleasant impact of sarcastic answers from maids, porters, and waiters and the haughty attitude and pride among officials and others, the things that an American can never become accustomed to." Skarstedt had two experiences which made him increasingly skeptical of Swedish life. When he came to Sigfrid Wieselgren's residence, he was almost prohibited by the concierge from entering, "because I didn't look fine enough," and the same thing happened at the home of C. O. Berg, the apostle of prohibition, when Ernst came to deliver an article for the periodical that Berg edited.<sup>13</sup>

As indicated earlier, the Skarstedts arrived in Sweden without informing their relatives and friends about their plans. Shortly after their arrival, Ernst, at the suggestion of Anna, wrote to his brother Waldemar, at that time a student at Lund, informing him of their presence in Sweden and asking him to keep it a secret. Waldemar, or "Lalla," as he was known, wrote in response: "To think of people recently living in the primeval forest of Washington Territory appearing suddenly requires, truthfully, a livelier temperament and imagination than that which is found among us people of Skåne who are not accustomed to think about anything else but ourselves and our personal circumstances." He urged Ernst to come quickly to Lund and "take our father by the hand and with a strong handclasp witness to the fact that the old days are past and that the new days are here." Ernst did not follow Waldemar's suggestion, and obviously Professor Skarstedt learned from others of his son's presence in Sweden.<sup>14</sup>

Although it is difficult to understand Ernst Skarstedt's great tardiness in contacting his father, since the declared purpose of the trip was to solicit the father's financial support in enabling the Skarstedts to establish themselves on a farm in America, it is perhaps equally difficult to understand Professor Skarstedt's attitude when he learned that his son and family were in Sweden. In a letter from Professor Skarstedt to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Westerdahl, the

American visitors were clearly informed that they were not welcome in the father's and grandfather's home in Lund unless the children, Esther and Marcus, were baptized. This was no new issue between the two Skarstedt families. In January 1883 Ernst had written in response to an inquiry from his stepmother that Esther was not baptized and would not be baptized until she was old enough to make the decision. Ernst described the situation: "My father did not wish to receive 'heathen' in his house. . . . My brother Waldemar had told me a couple of years earlier in a letter that a little son of one of our relatives had asked, when he found out by chance that our daughter had not been baptized, if she were a Mohammedan or a Mormon. He had heard some 'Christian' person call her a heathen. . . . I gave him a lecture on right reason, my brother wrote." Ernst expressed his amazement as follows:

But I could never think that such a lecture was necessary for adults, least of all in a university town which was a seat of learning. Although heathen are often more decent than Christians, it seemed disgusting that our children should be taken for Mormons, or Mohammedans, and since the matter was easily resolved, I asked the cordial and kind Pastor Wadström to baptize the children. The pastor's wife co-operated to make the occasion a pleasant one in their home. She said that she would always regard that room in her home as a holy place.<sup>15</sup>

The Skarstedts left Stockholm for Lund on November 27, a month after their arrival in Sweden. Many friends saw them off at the railroad station including Pastor and Mrs. Wadström, and *Lektor* Elmblad, the eighty-year-old theologian and father of Magnus Elmblad. Skarstedt felt that in this kindness "there was more Christianity than in all the theological systems and theological distinctions put together." The long journey from Stockholm which began at 5 A.M. came to an end at Lund that evening. Ernst recorded the following in his diary: "Arrived at Lund 8 P.M., where my mother [stepmother], Waldemar, Axel Hall, Johan Henrik, and Hedvig met us with a cab. I went with Axel and Waldemar. Papa scarcely said 'good evening,' when we came in." When Hegge, Ernst's half-brother, who was now twenty years old, saw the American visitor, he exclaimed: "Mamma, what a shabby looking fellow."<sup>16</sup>

Ernst continued to run into problems in relationships with his parents and family. The entry in his diary the day after his arrival includes the following: "Mamma cried because I went out without a

collar. I could not come to the dinner table that way. She had been out to buy clothes for the children, since they were so dirty, that a beggar had never come in worse condition to that house. I should pay for the clothes because if I had money to travel, I also had money to clothe our children. She felt sorry for Anna to have gotten such a husband." The complicated situation was described further: "When Anna said something kind about me, Mamma interrupted her by saying that I was not worthy of being liked since I was one who 'neither feared God nor knew how to dress myself'. . . . Anna told me that Mamma wore three different dresses today and that Hedvig is so beautifully decked out. Moreover, they are all real snobs, Waldemar and Sigfrid with lorgnettes and smug countenances. Axel Hall is the only one that I have seen who is exactly like himself."<sup>17</sup>

There were many other uneven places in the relationship of the American visitors in the parental home at Lund. Early in December, Ernst wrote that when Waldemar, Conrad, their father, and he had dinner together, it was rather quiet and formal. Ernst was informed that his father felt that Ernst's responses to him had been rather abrupt and Waldemar felt that their father talked only to Conrad and him. The general situation was described a week later by Ernst: "This afternoon Mamma and I had a terrible argument. She claimed that Strindberg denied the existence of God and that I ought to be ashamed to support him. Mamma was just as unreasonable as always. She has only read *Giftas*. Lalla did not know about that; she thus read it secretly." [*Giftas* by Strindberg was a highly controversial volume published in 1884.] On the same day, Ernst wrote to Pastor Wadström in Stockholm: "*Farbror* Wadström must excuse me that I haven't written sooner. If we had not been as tired as indicated above, we would have left here the day after our arrival but that would have been the equivalent of taking the life of my wife [who was pregnant] and therefore I forced myself to endure somewhat patiently the disgusting conditions which the new, or more correctly, the old relationships continue here."<sup>18</sup>

The family relationships of the American visitors continued to be a problem. Ernst records in his diary on Christmas Eve: "I had a quarrel with mother at breakfast because my shoes were not polished and I dragged in a lot of dirt into the parlor. She had prayed to God that she would be free from such trouble and sorrow from me when I

left in 1877, and she hoped that before my death I might repent and be sorry for what I had done to her so that I could be saved. Anna was told that she could have seen how I was dressed and polished my shoes." Following that outburst, Ernst talked with his father, and in that conversation was revealed the problems of Ernst's stepmother as recorded in his diary of the same date: "My father advised me to try to be quiet like he does. 'You come with your American follies and she with her Swedish follies,' he said, 'and thus there will be nothing but quarreling.' Papa said that he was glad to see us since otherwise he would not have gotten to see us in this life." Early in the month, Ernst recorded an interesting response of his father: "Papa kissed Marcus today. He had gone to him and patted him saying, 'Nice Grandpa.' "19

There were some pleasant occasions within the family circle that tended to heal the wounds of bitterness. Several evenings were spent in performing chamber music when the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven were played. His stepmother was a good pianist, brother Conrad played the flute, and his half-brother was an outstanding violinist. Ernst joined them on the violin. Moreover, in spite of first impressions, he became fond of Conrad and Waldemar, his brothers, and he was appreciative of the kindness and understanding which was extended to him by his stepmother's sister, Ellen Tretow. His half-brother Sigfrid, then a student at Lund, was kind and helpful. Waldemar introduced Ernst to the interesting and forthright newspaper publisher Christian Bülow, and to Henrik Wranér, the author, and to other writers, including Axel Lundegård and Ola Hansson. The American visitor was often a guest of Professor Esaias Tegnér, grandson of the famous Swedish poet. Then there were many visits, drinks, and dinners with his old friend, Axel Hall. He visited an old Chicago associate Dr. Hanisch in Copenhagen and Hugo Hesselgren, an old school friend who was editor of *Hallands-Posten*. He gave three lectures on America in Halmstad, Råå, and in the Hvilan folk high school. He also wrote a series of articles on America which were later published in the Eslöf newspaper.<sup>20</sup>

That Ernst Skarstedt's attitude was not always the most considerate is found in the entry which he made in his diary during the latter part of December: "Esther was fussy. At breakfast Mamma

asked Anna if Esther could have a little coffee since she was ill. 'By all means,' Anna answered without hesitation, then they poured more than a half cup of coffee into the child, with the consequence naturally that since she was not accustomed to that stimulating drink, she become more ill than before. . . . Under the present conditions I will have no more concern about the children's health. Marcus' stomach is now quite likely ruined. He eats meat and adult's food every day." Ernst then recorded his further discontent. "I cannot depend on Anna. She does not have the capacity to hold a position on important matters, she has no resistance and it is as little use to appeal to her ability to reason as it would be to do that with any other woman. How very little men really know about women." Then he continued his reflections: "One believes them to be misjudged, to be gracious angelic beings, while actually they are the most unthinking, narrow-minded, critical, custom- and tradition-bound slaves. Then one gets married and becomes imprisoned, enslaved, while one could be free." Moreover, there was a growing despair in the mind of Ernst as he wrote: "I have now seen so much falseness, unreliableness, and duplicity, that I despair of life. Were my own only provided for, I would rather do away with myself and thus free the world of one of the most despairing and unhappy pessimists!" In April 1886 he expressed similar sentiments. "I have been tired of life during the last years and lost interest in one thing after another. Only work satisfies me anymore."<sup>21</sup>

Ernst and Anna and their children lived in his father's large house for two months. They had been assigned to the attic which contained fairly adequate but unattractive space. In January, Ernst was asked by his father how much money would be required if he and his family would return immediately to America. Ernst has recorded his amazement: "I found this suggestion as incomprehensible as when ten years earlier I tried to understand the Hebrew words, '*Bereschit vara Elohim*,' [First words of *Genesis*: "In the beginning God created"] , as a student of theology in the class taught by *Lektor* Anders Malmström. I answered that I had tickets for America in my pocket, but did not wish to use them now since Anna was nearing the end of her pregnancy. He then asked me how much money it would take if we would go to Göteborg. My answer was the same." The matter was settled by a kind of a compromise. The American

Skarstedts should find a place to stay in Lund and his father would pay the bill. Accordingly, they moved to the home of a widow, Mrs. Erikson, on January 25, where they received a room and the evening meal for sixty kronor a month.<sup>22</sup>

On February 25, 1886, a daughter was born to Anna and Ernst Skarstedt, their third child. In December, Ernst had recorded in his diary, "Mamma has clearly told Anna, 'You cannot have your child here,' and she asked Anna if she could not go to the home of one of her aunts. Anna replied that we could travel anytime." Although Ernst's stepmother was not kind in this situation, a physician, Professor Carl Jacob Ask had suggested to Ernst that Anna would receive better care at a maternity hospital. When the time came for Anna to go there a problem arose. Ernst hurried during the night to the nearest coachman to engage a cab, but the coachman refused Ernst's plea and shouted from the window with full knowledge of the emergency situation: "No, not on my life will I take out my horses in the middle of the night." The attempt to find transportation elsewhere failed. Anna and Ernst were required to walk in the cold and snow for an hour before reaching their destination. Ernst, the unfailing statistician, records that Anna had twelve labor pains enroute. Two hours later, at 4:30 A.M., a daughter was born, and at the baptismal service at the maternity hospital she received the name of Wilma.<sup>23</sup>

Ernst's attitude toward Esther and Marcus was sometimes ambivalent. He recorded several interesting comments in his diary about their interests and activities. One day in April he took Esther to the museum in Lund. Waldemar also joined them on this pleasant and interesting excursion. Ernst was pleased with Esther's response as she asked many questions about what she saw. An ape proved to be a big attraction. When Esther looked at the parrots she pointed to one and said: "That bird talked with Mamma." When the Skarstedts stayed at Piko's boarding house in New York, enroute to Sweden, Anna had spoken a few words to the parrot kept there which had responded in its limited vocabulary. Although Ernst reported pleasant occurrences involving the children, his diary shows many instances when his restless nature found the care they required and the disturbances in which they were involved to be annoying. In April he wrote that Anna and he had been involved in a quarrel the



previous morning: "Yesterday morning Anna was angry while I tried to explain how much better it would be for us and the children under our present circumstances to give Wilma to some childless couple, who wished to have a child and could afford to raise the child, and do the same with Marcus, who needs parental care."<sup>24</sup>

Ernst realized fully that his relationships with his father were not satisfactory and that the latter was deeply annoyed by something. An insight came at a dinner occasion. A Swedish army officer, identified only as Lieutenant B., asked Ernst if the American emphasis on money was not worse than anything that could be found in Sweden. Whereupon Ernst declared that this was more desirable than the Swedish emphasis upon birth and an intellectual aristocracy since rich people could, if they desired, do more to help the suffering part of humanity than those who had only pedigree and learning to commend themselves. Ernst then wrote: "My father, who heard my answer, became offended, and a short time later when he went into his library and found me there, he asked how I dared to go there, where the aristocracy of learning was represented. In my surprise I could not find any answer but that I was trying to be infected by it. 'Was it for that reason that you went to America?' he asked sarcastically." Ernst did not reply immediately. Finally, in that tense situation, he tried to explain that the reason for the trip to Sweden was to seek a loan of \$2,000 with interest at 5% so that a farm could be bought in America. Professor Skarstedt responded that Ernst had not asked his advice in any of his previous enterprises, and immediately turned down the request.<sup>25</sup>

Although Ernst was often critical of his father, his response to this situation later indicated a reasonable attitude as he wrote: "I understand now clearly that I had wounded him more deeply than I had thought by emigrating to America. On more mature thought I cannot blame him for his refusal to support me. I had shown so much inconsistency and so much uncertainty in all my conduct that he could not possibly expect that I all of a sudden would change my approach." This conversation between Ernst and his father occurred on May 23, six months after Ernst's arrival in Lund. This long period of time had elapsed before he mustered the courage to tell his father the reason for his mission to Sweden. Although Ernst did not receive the loan of 10,000 kronor that he sought, he had received 1,000

kronor in January, as the second half of his inheritance from his mother and 1,000 kronor in addition, a few days following the conversation of May 23. Ernst reported a few days later that his stepmother informed Anna that his father was "furious on Sunday, because I asked for money. He will not give us an öre more than we have already received. 'Don't talk about it,' he shouted when Mamma tried to persuade him."<sup>26</sup>

Ernst described the last meeting with his father and then commented on his personality as follows:

"I saw him the last time in our lives on June 7, 1886. Neither one of us said very much. He was a person who hid his feelings for the most part, and I have inherited the same traits. . . . He was a master preacher, the best extemporaneous speaker I ever heard, unsurpassed in handling the subject in an ingenious and original way. He was inflexibly strict and full of deep earnestness, but there was still a vein of strong humor in his entire being. He became more mild in his later years from what I have heard and as I witnessed when he wrote to me from time to time."

Ernst further analyzed his father's situation:

"I still believe that a basic mildness existed even earlier in his character, but it was driven away by the clerical and theological dignity that became his second nature. He was simple and unassuming in appearance; there wasn't a trace of vanity and show. . . . Life was to him more than form and the seed more than the shell. He saw the folly of the world more clearly than many and he smiled at it in a melancholy way."<sup>27</sup>

The problems which beset Ernst Skarstedt in Sweden represented the combination of his distinctive individuality and his experiences in America. "I wanted to be free and independent in my dress, habits, and appearance as I had been in America," he wrote, "but that was not acceptable of course in Sweden with its worship of tradition and old ideas." His austere response to his homeland caused him to declare: "I saw so much fawning, make-believe, hypocrisy, and self-importance that I became upset in my innermost being. . . ."<sup>28</sup>

An interesting and cordial relationship developed between *Prostinna* Westdahl [the mother of Ernst's stepmother] and Ernst. He shared with her this feeling that he had "for many years been accustomed to being looked upon as a free man and to look

upon others as free men. We are all born by nature with free will; and I have for many years possessed the invaluable and magnificent right to think, to speak, and to act freely as long as I kept within the bounds of the law. Truly it is not pleasant to return to a country where one is robbed of these rights and where one must endure the familiar scene of observing the miserable, unfree people, a people in the bonds of pride, conceit, and hypocritical Christianity's damned chains." He then expressed the great joy that he could freely speak his opinions to his grandmother because she understood him so well. He indicated further that at times his father was considerate of Anna and that his stepmother also showed kindness. Moreover, Ernst acknowledged that he would have a better relationship with them "if I were a royalist and if I had any respect or esteem for the conventional . . . and the so-called 'appropriate.' But I now feel only contempt for all that — for class distinctions, prejudices, the artificial, supposed dignity, the present miserable hypocrisy in the Christian church through words and deeds and all that rubbish."<sup>29</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt often reflected on the differences between his new homeland and the place of his birth, but the result was almost always to decry the old and to praise the new. He summarized his feelings during this period: "I felt clearly that I was better suited for the humbug-free wilderness, where the beavers dig their tunnels . . . Every morning, when the weather was not too stormy, I meandered up to Lund University's new botanical garden, where among many other trees there were some Douglas pines from Oregon and Washington Territory and California giant firs which caused me to dream dreams of the peaceful primeval forest along the Pacific coast and about our own cabin under their shady branches."<sup>30</sup>

The plans of the Skarstedts to leave Sweden in April were delayed because the children came down with severe whooping cough. Anna was at times distressed about their condition, but gradually the children's health improved, and in June they were able to travel. Ernst and Anna and the three children were accompanied to the Lund railroad station by Ernst's stepmother, his brother Conrad, and his old and true friend, Axel Hall. They traveled from Lund to Malmö by rail and by ferry across Öresund from Malmö to Copenhagen. Axel Hall, brother Waldemar, and O. A. Linder, an American friend, were present to bid them farewell as they boarded

the S. S. *Thingvalla* for New York on June 9. Final words were spoken to the travelers from the dock as Waldemar tossed them four oranges. The Swedish excursion had come to an end.<sup>31</sup>

## VII

# A MOON OF ADVERSITY

When the *S. S. Thingvalla* docked in New York on June 25, 1886, after the Atlantic crossing from Copenhagen, the Skarstedts took the ferry to Castle Garden in order to complete the details for re-entry to the United States. They then went to the Scandinavian immigrant home on Carlisle Street where they stayed prior to leaving for Chicago. They observed closely the large stream of immigrants who were arriving from various parts of Europe in this decade which brought more than 300,000 Swedes to America, the greatest number of any period of similar length. Ernst was busy as usual during the brief time in New York. He returned to Castle Garden to assist one individual in making arrangements for transportation. He went in a vain search for a man who owed money to Dr. John Rundström, his old Kansas friend. Ernst and Anna made several purchases, including shoes for the family. On June 26 they boarded a train at Jersey City for Chicago, where they arrived two days later.<sup>1</sup>

Ernst made arrangements for the family to stay with the Rosenquists, who lived on Ada Street, while he went to visit old friends and to arrange for the sale of the Skarstedts' house in Wilmette. It seemed once again as if his Chicago associations created problems for him. When Andrew Chaiser, C. O. Carlson, H. A. Peters (Tancred Boissy), and he were enjoying beer in a cafe, Carlson abused Ernst saying, "I could not even keep myself clean, and that my parents would not have me at the table." Ernst records, "I

jumped up, hit him in the face, and grabbed him by the throat. The waiters separated us and showed me out." Shortly thereafter, when Ernst was visiting the office of *Svenska Tribunen*, Carlson came again and began to quarrel, and hit Ernst a light blow on the head.

But there were good and peaceful occasions too, when joyous fellowship was shared. Ernst was delighted that F. A. Lindstrand, the well-known publisher, agreed to purchase the Skarstedts' house in Wilmette for \$350. The Skarstedts left Chicago during the evening of July 3, for Portland via the Northern Pacific. They arrived there five days later.<sup>2</sup>

After recovering from a two-week illness, Skarstedt made the trip to Battle Ground and Mount Bell. Arrangements were made for the Skarstedts to live again in Peter Onsdorff's cabin until a house could be built farther up the mountain on the old Turnbull claim near "the big tree." The terrain was level and there were fifteen acres covered only by small bushes that could be readily cleared for farming. The scenery was enthralling. When the family had moved to Onsdorff's cabin on July 16, Ernst made plans for their new home in the depths of the forest.<sup>3</sup>

Although Peter Onsdorff and Aleck Olson had built a new road through the dense forest, there were still difficulties in transporting lumber and building materials over one stretch where the elevation increased 1,300 feet in two miles. Fortunately, Mason, a young man, owned four oxen which he made available for hauling 3,500 feet of boards and other items. The Skarstedt house when completed was sixteen feet by twenty feet, with an eight foot roof going to a point of twelve feet. Three rooms were partitioned from the full space. A large wood shed adjoined the house. Skarstedt did the carpenter work, assisted at times by Onsdorff. It was a simple house, in keeping with the taste of Anna and Ernst, but it provided shelter and essential space. The lumber and shingles cost the small amount of \$65. The new furnishings included a cookstove, an oven, one rocker, three chairs, two beds, quilts, dishes, cutlery, and fruit jars, all of which cost \$70. The family moved to the new home on September 20. Ernst built a sixteen by twenty-foot barn and a twelve by twelve-foot chicken coop adjoining the house. The full intention of Anna and Ernst was that this was to be their permanent home. Their dream of having the independence of a farm and home far from

civilization was being realized. These were exciting days for the Skarstedts. Although the title to the land was not fully cleared, since the relationship of a railroad company to ownership was uncertain, Ernst expected no serious problems in establishing eventual ownership.<sup>4</sup>

Ernst and Anna realized that in their isolated position intensive preparations must be made for the approaching winter months. There were no close neighbors and when the snow came it would be virtually impossible to leave the area, even in an emergency. Ernst bought what he called, "an especially beautiful cow," which was appropriately named "Beauty," a pig, a dozen chickens, three ducks, two geese, and two beehives. They already owned a dog and cat. The following provisions were laid in before the snow came: four barrels of flour, one barrel of sugar, two sacks of peas and beans, one barrel of apples, a large jar of honey, one keg of herring, fifteen bushels of potatoes, syrup, and rice. A hog was butchered and salted for later use. The long winter evenings would be somewhat brightened by the dim glow of a kerosene lamp, for which ten gallons of fuel had been purchased. These provisions cost \$90. A ton of hay was purchased for \$20.<sup>5</sup>

Life soon assumed a normal routine which was occasionally interrupted by a festive occasion. Christmas Eve was celebrated in the Swedish tradition by the Skarstedts alone in their distant place in the New World. However, Anna prepared a chicken dinner which enriched the normally tedious diet. Ernst wrote a Christmas poem which he dedicated to his wife. On what the Swedes call *Annandag Jul* (Second Day Christmas), Anna and Ernst invited their closest neighbors, Aleck Olson and Nelson, two displaced Swedish seamen, to observe the day with them. The Skarstedts entertained their immigrant friends with a good dinner after which they had tarts, wine, and apples. In the evening, there was violin music performed by Ernst, followed by a toddy. Aleck and Nelson left late that night, with Anna and Ernst watching as the flickering lanterns finally disappeared in the thick forest.<sup>6</sup>

The weather was quite mild in December and during the early part of January. Trees were cut down, fences were put up, and the final touches were completed on the buildings. The winter set in with severity in the middle of January. In the latter part of the month,

Ernst went for the last time during the winter to pick up the mail; he had a dreadful time since he fell several times in the snow. He returned with eight pounds of mail including copies of the *American Agriculturalist* and several back issues of Swedish American newspapers. Included were fifty-one reprints of his article, "Svensk Humbug" from *Svenska Amerikanaren*.<sup>7</sup>

The severity of the winter cold and snow continued to mount, as described by Ernst in his diary:

Feb. 1. Snow the whole day. Snow now 4 feet deep. Dug up some firewood out of the snow. Anna made a good pair of gloves out of some wool stockings. Sun shown for half a minute at noon for first time for a long time . . . Feb. 3. Zero in the morning. Clear. Melted icicles for cattle, 4 pans. Cow gives  $\frac{1}{2}$  gallon of milk a day. Feb. 4. Clear. When Anna got up it was 16 degrees in room. Dug up logs out of the snow and sawed and cut 200 pieces of firewood like Monday and Wednesday (100 yesterday). Melted snow as usual for the animals.<sup>8</sup>

The heavy snow created serious problems as Ernst recorded in his autobiographical account: "I had to shovel snow from the roof or otherwise it would have crashed. . . . We experienced a terrible time being cut off for two months from the outside world. We did not know if possibly our house would be covered with snow. The only visitors were Aleck and Nelson. Aleck came one day on skis with a bag of potatoes. He came to say farewell since he had decided to leave the mountain forever."<sup>9</sup>

Ernst's books furnished great resources for wife and husband in the loneliness of the wilderness. Dumas' classic, *The Three Musketeers*, was especially enjoyed as Ernst read aloud the exciting episodes. There was time also to share experiences with the children. In February, Ernst observed, "Wilma crawls every day." Later he recorded that Esther said, as she listened to the ticking of the clock: "The clock is knocking and wants to go out, but it cannot because Papa has closed the glass door."<sup>10</sup>

In March, the snow was so firm that people could walk on it without snowshoes. Ernst recorded that Anna and he left the house for the first time in two months. They made short excursions to the clearing and to the north side of the mountain where they had a thrilling view of the whole chain of Cascade Mountains and Mount St. Helens for seventy or eighty miles. They saw the farmsteads far in



the valley below with a certain amount of envy because there was no snow there. One day, when the snow was three feet deep, they were astonished to see Mr. and Mrs. Macomber climbing through the snow over the uncertain trail. Mrs. Macomber was deadly tired but she said she could not wait any longer to make inquiry about the Skarstedts. She was the first woman Anna had seen since the Bells moved from the nearby mountain five months earlier. Later in March, two visitors direct from Skåne in Sweden, Sven Christenson, a farmer, and a man named Jönson, a former sea captain, called on Ernst and Anna. Christenson had heard Skarstedt's lecture about America at the Hvilan school in Skåne and had decided to emigrate to America. One day Ernst walked to Portland, a distance of thirty-five miles in twelve hours. When he returned to their mountain home a week later, most of the snow was gone. There were, however, some traces of snow until the middle of May.<sup>11</sup>

The time had come for Anna and Ernst to develop the natural resources of their new farm. A man was hired to plow a substantial area for garden vegetables. They both worked hard to clear the area of roots of trees and shrubs. Garden beds were carefully prepared for peas, carrots, beans, corn, and other vegetables. A sizeable plot was planted in potatoes. Everything came up beautifully. But one day, they found the bean sprouts withered. They hurried to carry water to the plants but this did not help. They planted and replanted, but nothing would grow to maturity. It was not drought but frost that destroyed the growing vegetables. There was frost almost throughout the summer. The entire produce from their garden amounted to a few meals of green peas and carrots. Ernst described their situation: "We knew for certain that we lived at too high an altitude to expect any results from farming. I saw more and more clearly the hopelessness in my situation and the need to leave our place before my resources were completely exhausted. We did wish, however, to enjoy fully the beautiful summer."<sup>12</sup>

The wild animal life of the area soon made itself known as the snow disappeared and a new stirring came to nature. Several deer and cougar were seen from time to time. One day the children came running and crying out, "A large dog has looked at us." Investigation showed that it was probably a friendly bear on an exploring trip. One morning Ernst saw a deer among the cows. He grabbed his gun, and

after a short time he spotted the stately animal again, killing him with two shots. Ernst then described his reaction: "The sad and reproachful look that the deer gave me as he fell I can never forget. We dragged him home with difficulty. We gave chunks of venison to the Macomers, O'Connells, and Bells, and we had deer steak at home. But every time I ate it I felt regret over my deed. 'Why didn't he get to live,' Anna used to say, 'Think how much fun he had when he went free in the forest. There was the most beautiful sight I have seen or ever will see.' and I felt that she told the truth."<sup>13</sup>

Although Anna Skarstedt did not see much of women, the few contacts that she had with them were not pleasing to her. The women in the area had better houses, more adequate furnishings, closer neighbors, and greater comforts than she. Ernst records the situation:

Some of the women thought that she ought to separate herself from a man who brought her so much unpleasantness, but she answered them laughingly, that she did not wish to exchange the free life and beautiful nature on the mountain for the best farm in the lowlands, and when I pointed out to her first that we must move from the mountain, she offered to find a job and earn money so that we would not be forced to abandon our forest home where she felt so well and was so happy and at peace. I never saw a cloud pass over her brow and I never heard her utter a word of discontent.

Ernst continued to describe Anna's response to life: "To follow me as I walked, to help me with the outdoor work, to meet me when I went to get the mail were such pleasures to her simple nature that everything paled before them." When a man hauled a load of provisions to the Skarstedts' house and the tired horses were resting from the strenuous effort, Ernst heard this question: "Couldn't you move completely out of the world?" Then Ernst reflected: "It was exactly our endeavour to get as far as possible from the world of artificiality, constraint, and humbug which we shunned. But it is of course clear that there were difficulties in the way we lived. In spite of it we felt our way of life had almost the bliss of paradise."<sup>14</sup>

Since there was no possibility of earning a livelihood on their beautiful mountain farm, Ernst sought other alternatives. In July he walked to Portland and beyond to Mount Tabor to call upon some friends. He had decided that he must learn a trade and that it would

be photography. He bought equipment and supplies in Portland for \$40. He experimented at home, and by September, he felt that he knew enough to seek some clients. He traveled great distances receiving only a poor response. At first, the income was approximately equal to the cost of the materials. Anna wished to contribute to the support of the family, and, since she was skilled as a weaver, the Skarstedts went one day to Portland to seek a loom. They found one which they agreed to purchase later.

While in Portland they met two men, A. E. Schwartz and Olof Grafström, the artist, who became Ernst's life-long friends. Anna and Ernst walked long distances in search of a suitable farm and house but to no avail. Friends suggested several possibilities. Marcus Thrane advised them to join a socialist colony in Sinaloa, Mexico; but later he suggested that Ernst become a Unitarian minister. Dr. Josua Lindahl offered to rent him his farm in Kansas with the understanding that it could be operated as Ernst desired. Moreover, he could readily have returned to the world of Swedish American journalism. None of these alternatives were attractive. The Skarstedts wished to live a simple life in Washington Territory.<sup>15</sup>

Since it was not possible for the Skarstedts to live on their farm, they made a deal with Wooden whereby they could live in his dilapidated cabin on lower ground two miles north of Battle Ground and use one and one-half acres in the spring for a garden in return for feeding his cattle, horses, and hogs. The house consisted of one room, ten by twenty-six feet. Ernst then made an inventory of expenses and income during their stay on Mount Bell. The buildings and fence had cost \$150 in cash, but expenses for the cattle, chickens, bees, hogs, hay, etc., amounted to \$290. The cost of food totaled \$155; and clothes, kerosene, stamps, newspapers, etc., \$140. The income during the period was from the sale of 40 pounds of butter, \$10; 2 dozen eggs, 65 cents; 22 pounds of pork, \$2.25; one calf, \$10; berries, \$1; natural specimens sent to Dr. Josua Lindahl, \$2.50; and \$1.40 for taking care of a neighbor's cattle. Food grown and processed on the farm was estimated to be worth \$35, including 29 pounds of butter, 45 dozen eggs, 125 pounds of honey, 108 pounds of pork, 4 chickens, and a small amount of peas and carrots. In addition, he listed several gallons of wild berries, 20 pheasants and rabbits, one deer, milk, firewood, and rent valued at \$80 or \$90. The

cattle, chickens, bees, and tools that he brought from the mountain home to the Wooden place were worth \$135. The house and farm were sold for \$25 to Howard Yale, who claimed to be a descendent of Elihu Yale, an early benefactor of the distinguished college by that name. Then Ernst concluded: "I received nothing for all the running up and down the mountain in the area, having gone 1,700 miles on foot, but I lost \$550 in cash money. Nevertheless, in spite of it all, the hardship and loss, Anna and I thought with longing and yearning about our little home in the forest, enveloped as it was in our fantasy, with happy memories and romantic melancholy."<sup>16</sup>

Anna and Ernst worked hard to make it possible for them to live in the country. Shortly after moving to the Wooden farm on October 30, 1887, Ernst bought the loom that they had seen on an earlier trip to the Mount Tabor area, so Anna was able to use her skill in making rugs. Ernst traversed the countryside in search of customers who wished to be photographed and who were able to pay a modest fee, but they were few in number. B. G. Gröndal, the fine photographer in Lindsborg, Kansas, had been most generous in advising Ernst in correspondence about the art of photography. But his friend Dr. Josua Lindahl wrote to him: "A photographer must always have a pleasant disposition in meeting his customers, he must be fine, even elegant in his dress, and he must equip his studio with artistic and elegant furnishings. It seems to me that you would rather let the Indians eat you alive than to give yourself to any snobbery. Am I right? Then you are not suited to be a photographer." Ernst, nevertheless, made an arrangement with a Mr. Fritz, a photographer at Forest Grove, twenty-six miles south of Portland for \$25 by which he could further develop the art of photography.<sup>17</sup>

Ernst's stay in Forest Grove was cut short in the second week when a letter came from Anna. When she and the children were spending a Sunday afternoon with their neighbors, the Duffys, someone had broken into the Skarstedt house and stolen his valuable gun. Moreover, when Anna was feeding the cattle one day, a fifteen-year-old neighbor boy had ridden up to the farm and had addressed her in most insulting and abusive language. She wrote: "I am so afraid . . . I cried almost all day after such an insult. If I had possessed a revolver, he would never again have stepped off the horse. I do not dare to leave the children a minute. I am longing for

you and live in constant terror. Duffy's wife stays with me at night." Ernst left Forest Grove immediately for the home at Wooden's place. The Skarstedts decided that they would move to Vancouver, across the Columbia River from Portland. They rented a small house near the Methodist Church in Vancouver for \$8 a month. The cows, Red and Beauty, were sold for \$50 and the tools were disposed of for \$2 prior to moving to their new home in Vancouver.<sup>18</sup>

The move from the forest home to Vancouver, a small city, was made with much regret. Ernst has described the implications: "On the morning of March 13, 1888, we moved to Vancouver with two loads of possessions in rain, storm, and wetness, and took, although unknowingly, the first step toward our ruin. It was not our intention to remain city dwellers. We agreed to do all we could to collect enough money to buy a farm sometime, and Anna made me promise that we should exert all our strength to be certain that the children would grow up in the country."<sup>19</sup>

The attempt to make a living as a photographer was unsuccessful. Although Ernst walked hundreds of miles and sought energetically to please customers, the results were disappointing. His entire earnings from photography in 1888 amounted to only \$230. Anna wove carpets at 15 cents a yard and earned \$30. However, Ernst became increasingly involved in writing for Swedish newspapers in America and in his homeland. The previous year he had earned \$50 for translating articles from English to Swedish for *Hemlandet* in Chicago. He wrote a series of articles to which fourteen newspapers subscribed. The financial result was disappointing. His income from writing was \$80 during the year. Ernst's father had sent \$100 which they had as a savings fund to be used only in an emergency. The Skarstedts lived a simple life. Ernst made one concession to custom upon the urgent request of Anna. When Charles Fritz, the Forest Grove photographer and friend, came to take a family picture, Ernst put on a collar. This photograph was to be sent to the family in Lund.<sup>20</sup>

Ernst made occasional visits to Portland where he had several friends whom he had described: "There was the quickwitted, lively, and talkative Charles Holm; the slow, but clever and sarcastic Torgny Zachrison; the gentlemanly lover of art and literature, A. E. Schwartz; with his military bearing, the somewhat melancholy but

highly spirited fighter, Olof Grafström; the inflammable but at the same time soft-hearted, N. M. Bern.”<sup>21</sup> Anna enjoyed Ernst’s description of his friends and their conversation and said: “You need it so much, you who must go here and there, bowing and scraping before strangers and getting so little for your trouble.” When Ernst asked her if she would prefer that he be a teetotaler, she replied: “No, you know that I would not wish to be married to a man who couldn’t take a drink with his friends.” Then Ernst continued:

Then, as during all the following years of my life, I grieved over my lack of ability to make money and over my unsteady temperament whereby my family so often was placed in troublesome situations and unnecessary difficulties. When I expressed regret over this sad situation in a letter to her she answered in a consoling manner: “If any man is kind and does the best he can for his family it is you. If I have at anytime been ungrateful, you will forgive me. If I only have you, I don’t care for anything else in the world.” She was just as generous as she was tolerant and liberal.<sup>22</sup>

In the background of the love and affection of Anna and Ernst, “the moon of adversity crowded closer over our head, although we did not understand it,” wrote Ernst. At the beginning of August 1888, Esther, the oldest daughter, was less spry than usual. The parents thought it was a temporary indisposition, and accepted the invitation of some friends, the Johnsons, to visit them in their rural home. Esther became seriously ill with temperature of 104 and a high pulse rate, so Dr. Burt was called and informed the Skarstedts, to their sorrow, that Esther had typhoid fever. The family returned immediately to Vancouver where better medical care would be available. The young girl lived for three weeks almost exclusively on quinine, taking regularly twenty grams a day. The physician indicated that she could die at any moment. Day and night were spent by Anna with her daughter, providing loving care, preparing small portions of egg yolk, bouillon, and wine. Esther slowly became better.<sup>23</sup>

But “the moon of adversity” was still shining on the Skarstedts. When Ernst was far out in the country on a photographic mission one September day, he learned from a farmer who was returning from Vancouver that Anna had become seriously ill. He hurried home and found that Dr. Smith had earlier seen Anna and had prescribed twenty grams of quinine. Since she had felt so dizzy, she

had reduced the dosage to twelve grams. Anna seemed to be getting along well until September 22, when, sitting at the loom, she was struck with a sudden attack of fever and chills so she hurried to bed. Dr. Smith gave her quinine, antipyrine, and opium. On September 24 he diagnosed Anna's illness as typhoid fever. The dosage of quinine was increased to sixty grams a day. Anna became delirious and had alarming hallucinations. In her affliction, she tugged and tore at the quilts, pulled her hair, picked at the wallpaper, and, at times, had to be restrained by force from getting out of bed. Her incoherent ramblings indicated that she thought she was in Sweden. Ernst was in a sad situation. Esther was slowly recovering from typhoid fever and needed attention. Neither Ernst nor the children had eaten a decent meal for several days. He could not leave the house, the children were too small to secure help, there were no close neighbors, and he was without financial resources.<sup>24</sup>

Mrs. Wheeler came at 5 P.M. to see how Anna was getting along and found her in a coma. She went to get Dr. Smith who prescribed a mild medicine. Ernst concluded that the physician had given up all hope for Anna's recovery. Ernst recounts that "about 6:30 P.M., Anna turned her lips to me with a little happy smile and then gave me a smile of indescribable beauty. But soon she did not recognize me and I noticed that she could hardly breathe." The doctor then returned, and bending over Ernst where he lay on his knees by the bed, he whispered to Ernst, "She is dying."<sup>25</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt faced the greatest crisis in his life. "I felt as if my reason would leave me. Like a strange dream I remember that the room filled with people, and that Mr. Cockran, the court reporter, who had come to visit us and who had admired Anna's weaving, came storming in and cried out, 'What are you doing? Are you letting this woman die? Warm the iron, rub her, do anything, get life in her. If she dies, I don't think this town is worth existing.' At the same time I heard a voice say: 'Now she is dead.' It was 7:30 P.M. and someone led me from the room.' " The date was September 28, 1888.<sup>26</sup>

Ernst lived through a terrible night, but in the morning he gathered his strength in order to carry out his responsibilities. He arranged with the Episcopal minister, Mr. Wilson, to conduct the funeral service. Nuns from the local children's home and other kind

women took care of Marcus, Wilma, and Esther. He then drove a team and buggy to Portland to inform his friends of Anna's death. Bern, Grafström, Holm, Schwartz, and Zachrison came to Vancouver immediately. When the burial took place along the banks of the sun-filled Columbia River, Ernst was joined in his great time of sadness by these friends from Portland, by the Pearson family, and by a few residents of Vancouver.<sup>27</sup>



## VIII

# THE QUEST FOR ANSWERS

Deep sorrow and anguish possessed Ernst Skarstedt in the weeks following Anna's death. He received some comfort from the words of the minister at Anna's funeral service: "Blessed are they who die in love." Then he reflected: "In that case Anna is blessed, since love was the greatest power in her life; her entire being was love. But can I hope that I can go to where she is? Grant, O God, that I may again see my Bohuslän bride, my dearly beloved and unforgettable Anna." In October, Ernst wrote in his diary: "I felt irredeemably dismal. If there was only proof that the soul is eternal and that reunion after death and the resurrection of the body, etc., is not only a passing whim, I would seek to console myself with those thoughts. . . . I have read Professor Olsson's excellent book, *Det kristna hoppet* (The Christian Hope), which is full of consolation for a broken heart." Ernst was trying hard to believe that which now would be so meaningful to him in his great sorrow.<sup>1</sup>

The desperately bereaved husband and father was seeking answers to many questions. He joined an "investigating class" on spiritualism in Portland. When the leader "magnetized" a lady sitting near Ernst, the latter felt strange magnetic streams in his arms, almost causing him to move his arms up and down as was happening to the lady who was being "magnetized." The leader, a man by the name of Cornaro, spoke "exceedingly well." He said that "Jesus had never performed as great miracles as Mrs. Wheeler [the medium] had

performed right in the meeting place. Although it was true that Jesus had healed the blind, he had never called any spirits back to earth." Ernst played the organ as the members of the spiritualist group sang several songs, the favorite being, "O, what joy to feel you near, Spirits of the loved and dear." Ernst continued his association with this group for several weeks. He was told that he would become "a splendid medium." In November, he shared one day in the spiritualists' meeting from 11 A.M. to 1 P.M. and from 5:30 P.M. to 9 P.M. The same schedule was maintained a week later. However, Ernst became disillusioned with spiritualism as a source for gaining peace of mind. This was a scarce quality throughout his life and the native restlessness was intensified when he was separated from Anna.<sup>2</sup>

Ernst lived in a vale of sorrow and uncertainty for a long period. The circumstances would have fashioned that feeling for most children of men. He was not only without the companionship of his wife, but he was faced with the responsibility of two daughters, ages six and two, and one son, age four. He was desperately lacking in financial resources. His diary records gifts of \$1 or \$2 from several friends in Portland. The meager household goods, including Anna's loom which brought \$7.50, were sold, and Ernst moved in with the Johnson family living in the country near Vancouver. The children were cared for temporarily by the Johnson, Pearson, and Friberg families. When Ernst had adequate meals it was generally upon the invitation of friends. Late in October, Johnson told him that he could no longer have a room in his home. Ernst then went with Esther, the oldest daughter, to Portland, early in November 1888, where he rented a small room in the home of his friend, A. E. Schwartz. Fortunately, he had found good and friendly homes for the children. Marcus lived with the Peter Pearson family on a farm near Vancouver, Washington; Esther, with the Andrew Brown family at Hockinson, northwest of Vancouver; and Wilma with the Oscar Peterson family on a farm near Portland.<sup>3</sup>

The diary shows that in the midst of his grief Ernst did his utmost to produce some income through photography. He walked long distances in search of patronage but the results were discouraging. On the last day of October, he went on a sad mission to the Vancouver cemetery where he raised at Anna's grave a small

wooden marker on which were painted the salient facts of life: "Anna Skarstedt. Born April 25, 1859. Died September 28, 1888."<sup>4</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt left Portland early in December 1888 for Chicago on a five-week trip that included a stopover at Minneapolis-St. Paul. He visited at St. Paul with A. E. Johnson, a land promoter, but the latter's suggestion that Ernst write a series of articles on Washington and Oregon was unproductive. He went from Minneapolis to Chicago where he visited old journalistic friends like F. A. Lindstrand ("Onkel Ola"), Jakob Bonggren, O. A. Linder, Ninian Waerner, C. O. Carlson, Emil Lundquist, and others. Ernst's brother, Conrad, was a resident of Chicago at this time, and Ernst saw him on many occasions. While having lunch with Linder, at Sissman's saloon on State Street, he saw a bearded man at a nearby table. He soon recognized the man as former Pastor Hedman, an old friend, who had left the ministry. Ernst attended several spiritualist meetings in the company of Jakob Bonggren, but he was singularly unimpressed with the alleged findings at the seances. He was amazed at the attempted deception by one spiritualist who took a photograph of Skarstedt which supposedly included photographs of spirits which hovered around the principal subject of the photography. Ernst later faked photographs to show the falsity of this technique.<sup>5</sup>

On the return trip to Portland, Ernst stopped to visit with Marcus Thrane at Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The relationship between the two good friends had cooled because Ernst had been critical of the strikers in the Haymarket Square riot in Chicago, in May 1886 while Thrane had supported them. When the two men met again, cordial relations were re-established. Ernst, however, was distressed by the rapidity with which old age had weakened Thrane, who also was exceedingly pessimistic. After a brief visit with Gustaf Wicklund and A. E. Johnson at St. Paul, he returned, on January 20, 1889, to Portland. The Chicago trip was an interlude preceding an important publication project that soon occupied his thoughts and time.<sup>6</sup>

In April 1889, the year following Anna's death, Ernst completed writing a unique volume, *Vid hennes sida* (At Her Side), in which he described his life with Anna during the years of their courtship and marriage. In the final chapter, Ernst wrote about Anna: "There probably has never been anyone who was freer from selfishness, self-interest, and covetousness than she: never anyone

who with greater honor bore the name of woman or came closer to the ideal of perfect wife and mother than she did, especially in the last two years of her life. She was the personification of self-sacrifice. In plain words, she seemed to enjoy helping others and spared no effort, or inconvenience to be of some help and use in any situation."<sup>7</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt gradually picked up the broken pieces of life after the death of Anna. He was fortunate to be able to have a room in the home of A. E. Schwartz in Portland, an old friend, who understood Ernst's sorrow. He was also closely associated with Olof Grafström, the artist, an old and sympathetic friend. There were intervals of happiness when he went for brief visits with Esther, Marcus, and Wilma, but life had a great emptiness about it, nevertheless.

Friends sought in various ways to share their time with Ernst. He was the guest of Charles Fritz, in June 1889, on a long excursion into the rugged Mt. Hood area. Their first camp out was at Hood River Falls on June 11. After eighteen miles of strenuous hiking, they spent the next night at Lost Lake. Fritz had engaged a Mr. Divers as guide, supposedly the first white man to have seen Lost Lake. During the two succeeding days they went through dense forests, over steep grades, and into and out of deep canyons to Mt. Hood. There was considerable delay on one occasion when it was necessary to unload the pack horse which had difficulty in moving through a bog. What was more critical, they were lost in this wilderness. The terrain was such that the pack horse and supplies must be abandoned as the travelers fought their way over rough country. After two days of aimless wandering, they were able, with the aid of binoculars, to spot a dwelling. Tired but grateful, the hikers were received cordially, fed, and housed. Ernst had eaten only two crackers and three small sardines during the previous fifty-three hours.<sup>8</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's contributions to the Swedish American press were relatively minimal during 1889-90, with only seventeen items printed in 1890. An important factor was the time that Ernst gave to two books that were published that year. *Oregon och Washington* (1890) was a brief survey of those two states with special reference to the history of Swedish Americans. This work was expanded later

into full-length, detailed books on each of these Pacific Coast states. An important contribution was made to Swedish American literature when Skarstedt published an anthology of Swedish American poetry, *Svenska-Amerikanska poeter i ord och bild* (1890). He worked on this manuscript for more than a year. The poems of eighteen Swedish Americans provided a representative collection which became a classic in its field. Skarstedt not only selected the contents from the wide range of possibilities, he also wrote a foreword and biographical sketch of each poet.

Although the request for biographical information and permission to use the poems of selected Swedish American writers for Skarstedt's anthology might have been a completely formal matter that would come to an end when the reply was forthcoming, there was one correspondent with whom the result was not transitory. The poems of Pastor A. A. Swärd, a Lutheran clergyman of Marshfield, Oregon, had attracted Skarstedt's attention, and, following preliminary correspondence, a friendship developed that was broken only when Swärd died of tuberculosis on July 20, 1891, at the age of thirty-five. The importance of this correspondence and the relationship to Ernst Skarstedt is demonstrated clearly when in 1895, he published nineteen of Swärd's letters to him in a small volume entitled *Enskilda skrifter af Pastor A. A. Swärd* (Selected Letters of Pastor A. A. Swärd). These letters, covering the period from October 24, 1889, to March 30, 1891, are interesting as a portrayal of the philosophy and faith of Swärd but they also point to the puzzlement and despair of Skarstedt at this stage in his life.

A wide range of subjects were included in the exchange of letters, but the most meaningful aspects were related to personal philosophy and intimate sources of faith. In a letter, in November 1889, Swärd sympathized with Skarstedt because he felt that the latter's poems and letters "came from the heart of a wounded bird." He sensed that there was deep melancholy in Ernst's life, and it seemed at times that "peace is found only in the bottom of the sea." Swärd expressed his concern as a friend and without any accent of censure: "One thing over which I feel so depressed is that you cannot find any consolation in the Christian faith. It is as if an insurmountable wall is raised between you and me." Skarstedt was still seeking answers to what seemed to be his unending perplexity about life. In

the introduction to the letters, Skarstedt may have been reflecting his own feelings about this correspondence when he wrote: "I dare to hope that many vacillating, doubting souls will find consolation through Swärd's words and that they will gain stability and peace from his easily understood statements."<sup>9</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt went to San Francisco during the latter part of August 1891, upon the invitation of A. G. Spencer, publisher of *Vestkusten*, to become editor of the well-known Swedish weekly. He felt badly to learn upon arrival that the publisher had not informed the former editor, Almquist, of his termination. The response of Ernst was typical. He provided \$5 from his weekly \$25 salary until October 1 as compensation for Almquist. Spencer then agreed to add \$2.50 per week, so the displaced editor had an income of \$30 per month during the next several months.<sup>10</sup>

Ernst's position on *Vestkusten* provided for a more settled existence than had been his pattern of life for several years. The Swedish weekly traced its origin to 1886, when it was founded by the Reverend John Telleen as a monthly journal of the local Swedish Lutheran Church. Spencer acquired it in 1887 and renamed it *Vestkusten*, a weekly. In 1891, reorganization by Spencer resulted in forming a publishing company and the hiring of Skarstedt as editor. Alex Olsson, who became one of Skarstedt's closest associates, was a typesetter in 1890, and later became director of the business aspects of the publication. In January 1894, Skarstedt and Olsson bought *Vestkusten* from Spencer.<sup>11</sup>

Ernst soon established himself in the San Francisco Swedish community. His diary records many social activities. Included among his close associates were Olof Grafström, the artist; Fred Sandelin and Fredrik Hulting, druggists; the Reverend C. M. Esbjörn, pastor of the Swedish Lutheran Church; Dr. Fredrik Westerberg and Dr. August Fehlen, physicians; Joseph Okerblad, Axel Lundquist, and John Olof Stenmark, businessmen; O. M. Benzon, poet; and Alex Olsson. Ernst's San Francisco years, in contrast with his Chicago years a decade earlier, were characterized by association with what could be called more "substantial" persons. This does not mean that his pattern of life changed significantly. He was constantly on the go, visiting, talking, eating, and drinking.<sup>12</sup>

Ernst was occupied with a heavy load of work at *Vestkusten*

and with his social activities, but life seemed good to him. On the last day of the year, 1891, he wrote the following in his diary:

This year from many points of view was the happiest I have experienced for a long time. But how it would have gone if I had not taken the position with *Vestkusten* is hard to say because my income was skimpy before that and it certainly would have been more skimpy. It seemed strange to receive \$20 every week at the outset, and later \$25 and with my limited needs it was only a short time that I had several hundred dollars. I spent only \$108 for food, \$74 for drinks, \$49 for rent, \$39 for clothes, and \$116 for travel. I had \$116 at the beginning of the year, and I now have about \$335.<sup>13</sup>

The year 1892 was a busy and interesting one. Late in January, he recorded personal developments: "Today I had two drinks and a glass of wine with Grafström, the first in six weeks." May 4 was a day to remember: "I didn't have a drink all day." Ernst was apparently beginning an interesting experiment that lasted for almost a year. During this period, strange as it may seem, he attended many prohibition meetings and was on the program at these meetings on several occasions as a musician or reading his own poetry. On April 15 the following entry occurred in his diary: "Except for three drinks and a glass of wine at Sandelin's on December 30 together with a couple of toddies in January, I had not tasted a drop of spirits for almost 11½ months. But I thought that abstinence had reached long enough and so I put an end to it." It is interesting to speculate on why Ernst Skarstedt, an interesting man who loved the conviviality of much drinking, became such a faithful teetotaler for almost a year. One conjecture may be related to his courtship of Miss Ida Lindberg of San Francisco, who apparently did not drink spirits. In May, he proposed marriage to her but she declined. She was not certain that she had adequate affection for Ernst. Moreover, close observation of marriage had made her skeptical of it for herself.<sup>14</sup>

Life in San Francisco provided considerable variety. In June 1892, he recorded: "Was on a sailing expedition with a group of friends—Lundquist, Sandelin, Okerblad and others, about 30 people. Went on land at Angel Island and later cruised a long time in the cold weather. The sailing cost us \$3.15 each." He attended spiritualist meetings from time to time. He also turned to his old interest in phrenology. In August, he wrote: "Benzon and I went to Hadock,

the phrenologist. He said among other things that I was hard working and wanted to have many irons in the fire, that I was not a good speaker, that I was gifted in poetry and could write forcefully." In November 1892, Esther, his daughter, now eleven years old came for a visit that lasted until the following May. He wrote that he had "to deposit \$100 with Andrew Brown, in whose family Esther was living, as surety that I would send her back, so that if this failed to happen, the Browns would be compensated for clothes bought for her." Esther visited at the homes of his many friends. On Good Friday, 1893, father and daughter were out on a pleasant walk enroute to the home of Brunsells, some friends, when Esther said that "we ought not to go around and have a good time, since Jesus had such a hard time on that day. We went then instead to church."<sup>15</sup>

Ernst's diary, in 1893, recorded a variety of activities ranging from attendance at orchestra concerts to seeing Jim Corbett, the heavyweight boxing champion, play a role in *Gentleman Jack*. He had also seen Sullivan and Jackson, other famous boxers, in dramatic roles and concluded "that their careers as actors were failures." In February, he was a guest at the home of the Westbergs, where he met members of the Swedish Ladies Quartet. The result was described by Ernst: "When I entered two of them were startled, stepped back suddenly, and Miss Sjöö said after the introduction: 'It is amazing how much Mr. Skarstedt looks like Strindberg, where-upon Miss Norelius added: 'Yes, I was quite overcome and wondered how it happened that Strindberg was out here.' The only difference was that I was shorter than Strindberg." In June, Ernst suffered a financial reversal when the Peoples Home Bank, in which he had \$200 deposited, closed its doors. But three days later, he recorded in his diary that he had received a check for \$157.89 from his grandmother's estate. He then rather surprised himself by going to Rehn, a tailor, where he was measured for his first suit at a cost of \$27.00.<sup>16</sup>

In June 1893 the Swedish community in San Francisco made elaborate preparations for the visit of Bishop K. H. G. von Scheele, of the Visby diocese in Sweden, who was on an American tour. Strange as it may seem, Ernst, a long-time anticlerical and critic of episcopal hierarchy, was active in making arrangements for the Bishop's visit. The Reverend Esbjörn, Swedish Consul Lund, Dr.



Lundborg, druggist Hulting, and Skarstedt formed the planning committee. When Bishop Scheele and his party arrived in San Francisco from Portland, he was greeted by the committee and welcomed by a crowd of 1,600 people at Metropolitan Hall where he gave the principal address. Mrs. Hulting, piano, and Ernst, violin, presented Beriot's *Air varié* No. 7 for the assembled people. A lunch was held for the distinguished guest and the members of his party at the spacious Hultberg home on Folsom Street, where Ernst read a Swedish poem which he had written for the occasion. Following the luncheon, the Bishop patted Ernst on the back and thanked him for the fine poem. The church dignitary informed Ernst that he was scheduled to visit Lund in the near future and that he would bring greetings to Ernst's father. Professor Skarstedt must have been somewhat puzzled when he learned from the Bishop about his son's new role in the realm of church affairs.<sup>17</sup>

The course of events includes the unexpected, and on July 14, 1893, something happened that changed Ernst Skarstedt's life. His diary for that date includes this entry: "At a wedding party at Hagers, 25 Lakeside Street, I met a young, beautiful, cheerful and exuberant girl by the name of Ellen Högberg. . . . She played the guitar and sang beautifully." Nine days later, when Ernst and his friend Clasell played a violin duet at a concert to raise money for a seaman's home, he wrote, "Miss Högberg sang and played the guitar. I met her hurriedly in company with Esther Johanson. . . . Miss Högberg seemed just as pleasant and talkative as when I met her last time." The diary is silent on the subject of Ellen Högberg until on October 7, when fate seemed to be entering into Ernst's life: "I went to the office but couldn't sit still. I went walking on Market Street, and thought of buying some quinine [Ernst had been ill the previous day] and taking some, when I quite unexpectedly met Miss Högberg, who spoke kindly to me and thought that it was strange that we should meet so unexpectedly. We walked for an hour and a half, I took her to a dime museum, and followed her to Hagers, where she lived." Ernst then gave Ellen a ticket to a concert at Manhems where Classell and he were scheduled to play a violin duet. Ernst and Ellen met after the concert and enjoyed some tea and beer at a cafe on Market Street. They talked until 2 A.M. Ernst later wrote in his diary: "There was something so open and frank about her that after I

said good-bye, I felt really lonesome.”<sup>18</sup>

Events moved rapidly for Ernst and Ellen as they met frequently. In the latter part of October, they went on an excursion to Mill Valley, and as they sat on a bench near a waterfall, they had a long and rather strange conversation. Ernst's diary records the salient facts: "I had felt for a long time that I would die on November 22. I asked her if I by chance lived beyond that day, whether I might look upon her as mine forever. She answered: 'If I can render you any happiness, I have no objection!' As a beautiful moon shone over the bay, I kissed her, Ellen saying that she wished the beautiful moon would shine all night. We then had something to eat and walked until midnight.”<sup>19</sup>

Ernst and Ellen were married on November 22, the day he had felt would bring his death, with the Reverend C. M. Esbjörn of the Swedish Lutheran Church as the officiating clergyman. Ernst, although a happy man, recorded his annoyance over the great attention paid to curling Ellen's hair, dressing her so meticulously, and making so much fuss over the affair. He objected to the procession in which they came arm in arm through the double doors of one room into the presence of the clergyman and guests but he yielded to Ellen's desire in this matter. His diary for that day records his feeling: "I was almost overcome with laughter as I observed the ridiculousness in the festive situation." He enjoyed the good food and observed that they were served "the best chocolate I have ever tasted." Unfortunately, Ernst's friend and fellow musician, Clasell, who was scheduled to bring two bottles of champagne and a box of cigars, failed to do so. The newlyweds received many gifts including a fine set of china, a beautiful rug, and a comfortable rocking chair. They set up housekeeping in the upper floor of a house at 123 Liberty Street, San Francisco, with four rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom for which they paid \$18 rent per month. Furniture and other items had been bought for the sum of \$126.00.<sup>20</sup>

The young couple enjoyed life and shared many events and activities. Ellen's interest in music was a real bond of unity between them. She was a pleasant and jovial person who in turn produced a more cheerful attitude in Ernst than had been the pattern for many years. The two of them enjoyed trips in the San Francisco area, and, in June, they were happy on a vacation that brought them to

Portland. They spent several days in the Vancouver area, Ernst's former home, where they visited extensively with Marcus and Esther. Ernst also saw many old friends in the Portland area.

On October 26, 1894, Ellen Aurora, a daughter weighing nine pounds, was born. The rite of baptism was performed by the Reverend C. M. Esbjörn, late in November, in the presence of the parents and several of their friends. It was a festive occasion which included much music, a fine meal, and toddies. Life seemed good to Ernst and Ellen but sadness soon came to them. On December 2, Ellen Aurora died. When Ernst returned from the burial service in the Oddfellows Cemetery, he recorded these words in his diary: "It felt so terribly empty at home since we missed the little one so very much."<sup>21</sup>

The life of Ernst and Ellen moved in familiar circles without any unusual developments during the rest of their time in San Francisco. The year 1895 opened with good news when Ernst received a letter from Waldemar, his brother, stating that each of the children had inherited 4,045 *kronor* from Grandmother Wieselgren. The normal routine of life varied occasionally as Ernst attended spiritualistic meetings and consulted with phrenologists. In May, Ernst's diary records that he photographed Ellen's hands and his own, and sent these photographs to a phrenologist. The following report came back: "This is an intellectual man of refined tastes having courteous manners and considerable literary ability. He has great intellectual powers and is very critical. . . . He will inherit property and do well financially." Ellen's hands told the phrenologist the following: "This young lady is of a loving nature, so affectionate that she lets her sweetheart know too well the state of her feelings. This girl wants her own way. . . . She speaks her own mind, especially when angry. She is affable and takes to society naturally."<sup>22</sup>

There was great joy in the Skarstedt household in March 1896, as Ernst and Ellen awaited the birth of a child. Ernst recorded in his diary that during the early morning of March 9 he fetched Mrs. Larson at 2:45 A.M. to assist Ellen. Next day, at 5:15 P.M., an eight pound daughter with long, black hair was born. She received the name Mellie Helena.<sup>23</sup>

In this San Francisco period, Ernst kept in touch with his three children in his first marriage with Anna. Although the direct contacts

were infrequent, there were occasions when there were close relationships. In November 1895, Marcus came to live with Ellen and Ernst. He enrolled in school at the beginning of the new year. When the Skarstedts moved to Castle Rock, Washington, toward the end of October of that year, he lived with them for a short time.<sup>24</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's San Francisco years show his great productivity as a journalist and author. The number of articles published was 522, but only seven of them were published in newspapers other than *Vestkusten*. Although he lost in a measure the broad contact which he had established with his readers in the Swedish American population, his articles were made available through quite frequent reprints by other Swedish language newspapers. Only two of his articles were published in Sweden during this period.<sup>25</sup>

The wide range of Skarstedt's interests as a journalist is indicated by many topics which he considered in his newspaper articles. He wrote editorials or articles on freedom, overpopulation, immigration, prohibition, trade unions, and socialism. He contended that prohibitionists and socialists were engaged in wild fantasies that destroyed individual rights. He was hostile to Catholicism and sought to prove that the authoritarian element in it had a tragic historical record. Several articles were devoted to theosophy and phrenology, a rather attractive and recurrent interest. There were also articles on the unseen and occult world. Ernst wrote many book reviews that further illustrate his life-long pattern of extensive reading.

The conservative political views of Ernst Skarstedt were clearly expressed in editorials and articles which appeared in *Vestkusten*. In the election of 1892, he urged the readers to support President Benjamin Harrison, the incumbent, against former President Grover Cleveland and James B. Weaver, the Populist candidate. Although he acknowledged that Cleveland has been a satisfactory president, the Democratic leadership had been inferior in efficiency and strength to that of Republican administrations to "whose wise, well-planned actions our nation must be grateful for all the success and prosperity that the general citizenry has enjoyed during the last thirty years." Skarstedt heartily endorsed the protective tariff as advantageous for American labor and industry. He praised Harrison for the calm and sensible way he had served as president and "for his conscientiousness in appointing office-holders." Ernst was especially critical of the

Populists "for their free-money proposals and for their impractical air-castle ideas."<sup>26</sup>

The leadership of Cleveland and the Democrats following their victory in 1892 was unacceptable to Ernst Skarstedt. In an editorial in January 1895, he argued that when they took office two years earlier, there had been a balance in the Federal treasury and the national debt was being paid off. Now the expenses exceeded income by one hundred million dollars a year. He wrote: "Although the Democratic administration heretofore has shown itself incapable of conducting the nation's business it is to be hoped that in this time of need, someone among these fair-haired people will develop some plan for saving the nation. Otherwise, we may well wait until the Republicans gain power once more, unless it will then be too late."<sup>27</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt was especially hostile to the reform movement of the 1890s. Writing in August 1894, he observed, "One finds that most of the proceedings which are proposed to bring about improvements among men are little else but idle nonsense and that the reformers themselves are in most cases not a bit better than 'the poor people' they seek to reform." When he contemplated their declarations and policies he asked a long question:

Are these social reformers, socialists, nationalists, populists, and other world improvers, who spout and vent their spleen over the existing order, who condemn everyone who had succeeded in scraping together more dollars than they, who oppose anyone who is satisfied with his own conditions, who criticize every person who is not ready to approve and support immediately every immature idea or fantasy that springs up in some muddled brain—are they really better citizens than the rest of us?

The critical words of the editor had a deep-seated source in his view of man: "But to create out of a poor person a good one is not any more likely than to get good fruit from a worm-eaten and decaying tree. One must have gone through the world with eyes closed to imagine anything else."<sup>28</sup>

The regional differences in the United States loomed large in Skarstedt's appraisal of the present and future. In an editorial in April 1895, he discussed this factor in considerable detail. He contended that the interests of the states on the West coast differed greatly from those of the states in the East. Moreover, there was a

great divergence between the problems in the South and in the North. He concluded, "... the United States as a whole is far too large and contains far too many conflicting interests for it to maintain itself as a Republic in the long run." There were already evidences of great problems and the inability of the federal government to deal with them was becoming more apparent year after year. His solution was the following: "We believe that our nation would develop much better if it were divided into three or four republics. It does not seem impossible that such a division could take place peaceably in the future by congressional action and with the assent of the majority of the population, without conflict and use of armed force."<sup>29</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's relationship to *Vestkusten* provided the opportunity and responsibility to write about Swedish historical and contemporary developments. The three hundredth anniversary of the birth of King Gustavus Adolphus (Gustavus II, 1594-1632), the great hero of Protestantism in the era of the Thirty Years' War, was observed with great festivities in 1894 in Sweden and the United States. Skarstedt was bitterly opposed to such celebrations, arguing that it was a terrible thing to praise "a mass-murderer's memory." In answer to the question, "What brought Gustavus Adolphus to Germany?" he replied: "Glory, the most egotistical glory. There is neither rhyme nor reason to celebrate the memory of a man who with fire and burning, war and strife, sought to spread the doctrine of redemption." He later criticized severely Dr. Carl A. Swensson, president of Bethany College, for seeking to promote the memory of Gustavus Adolphus as "Sweden's greatest son." He could not understand how Swensson, a clergyman and a champion of the gospel of peace, could possibly consider a war hero as "a nation's greatest son." Moreover, Swensson, in doing so, had failed to recognize the contribution of Swedish poets, scientists, scholars, and other men of peace.<sup>30</sup>

The pages of *Vestkusten* contained many columns of Skarstedt's translations into Swedish of stories and articles from English and German. In 1893 *Vestkusten* published a 120-page book, *Rosor och tornen* (Roses and Thorns) which included primarily Skarstedt's translation of the writing of T. S. Arthur and Friedrick Gerstäcker which had appeared originally in *Vestkusten*. This

newspaper also published serially Skarstedt's study of Swedish American poets and poetry which resulted, in 1897, in the important volume, *Våra pennfäktare*.

The amazing energy of Skarstedt is shown clearly from the detailed entries in his journal. Although he was the editor and principal writer for *Vestkusten*, he recorded by date and place his participation and attendance at 463 public events during slightly more than five years.<sup>31</sup> He was regular in attendance at plays, concerts, and lectures. Whenever occasion afforded the opportunity, he enjoyed symphony orchestra concerts. He always was an enthusiastic member of audiences at variety shows. But he also was present at performances by the Sells Brothers' circus, the Robinson circus, and other organizations of this type. He brought Esther, his daughter, to a presentation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and he was accompanied by Olof Grafström to the plays of Shakespeare and a presentation of *Faust*. He heard lectures on spiritualism, phrenology, the sources of natural gas, and one on currency reform by General James Weaver. He apparently enjoyed the dramatic skits of Yon Yonson, since his journal records his presence at three of his presentations.

But Ernst Skarstedt was not only a spectator. His great interest in music, especially in violin, dated from his boyhood years at Lund. He was especially active in orchestras, generally as the second violinist. His largest number of appearances were with Randall's, Knell's, and Plese's orchestras. These organizations performed generally at dances, but also presented concert programs. Ernst also participated occasionally as a violin soloist and in duet and ensemble appearances. The extent of his musical activity is demonstrated statistically by eighty-one appearances and rehearsals in 1893, sixty-three in 1894, and sixty-five in 1895. In addition to this involvement in music, he read his poems on several public occasions. He also participated in panel discussions at the Swedish Lutheran Church on such topics as, "Is equality greater in the United States than in Sweden?" and, "What will be the status of women in the next century?"<sup>32</sup>

The most unique aspect probably of Ernst Skarstedt's San Francisco years was his regular attendance at church services. This is rather surprising because his rationalistic, anti-clerical attitude had

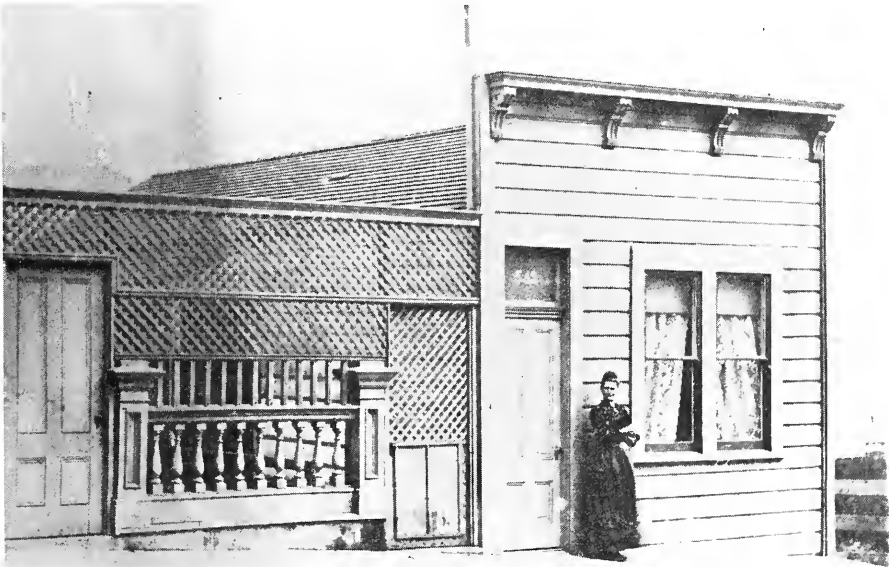
become a pattern of life when he was a young man. The new element in his attitude must be attributed to his respect for the Reverend C. M. Esbjörn, pastor of the Ebenezer Swedish Lutheran Church in San Francisco. His recent, close relationship with the Reverend A. A. Swärd, whose untimely death occurred shortly before Skarstedt came to San Francisco, may also have been a factor. In any event, Ernst recorded in his journal that he attended church services on forty-four occasions in 1892, and that he had been at such services forty-seven times in 1893. Almost all such attendance was at Esbjörn's church, although he did attend a meeting of the Salvation Army in July 1897, to hear the sermon of "Happy Bell," a converted cowboy. When Pastor Esbjörn left San Francisco toward the end of 1894, Skarstedt's church attendance came to an abrupt halt. He attended no church services in San Francisco in 1895 or 1896.<sup>33</sup>

After approximately five years in San Francisco, Ernst became restless once again for life in the country. In March 1896 he wrote: "I felt myself tired of newspaper life. Moreover, for eight months we had not received a regular salary." Two days later Ernst sold his interest in *Vestkusten* to Alex Olsson, although he continued to write for the paper for several months. He also traveled rather extensively in Oregon and Washington. On October 26, 1896, he bought a farm at Castle Rock, Washington, with a down payment of \$400.<sup>34</sup>





Chicago journalists: Jakob Bonggren and Ernst (top row);  
Fritz Schultz and O. A. Linder (1888)



Ernst's second wife, Ellen, in front of San Francisco  
home (1894)



Ernst and Alex Olsson at *Vestkusten* office (1895)



Ernst's farm at Castle Rock, Wash. (1897)



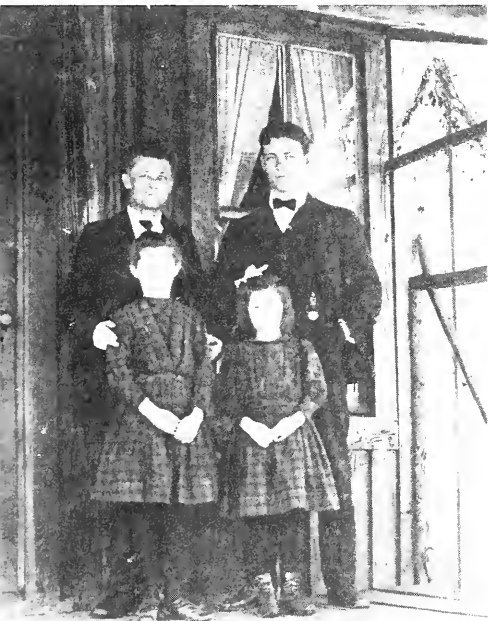
Ernst plowing his Laton, Cal., farm (1903)



Ellen and Ernst with Martha  
and Mellie (1899)



Ernst and Ellen (1903)



Ernst, Marcus, Mellie and  
Martha (1907)



Ernst and F. A. Lindstrand  
("Onkel Ola") 1910



Ernst and Ellen with Mellie, Martha  
and Vera outside Columbia City,  
Wash. home (1908)



Ernst with Mr. & Mrs. Gustaf Olsson,  
Olof Grafström, Mr. & Mrs. O. A.  
Linder and Marcus (1910)



Professor Skarstedt's home, Lund,  
Sweden (1910)

## IX

# FARM AND CITY

When Ernst Skarstedt left San Francisco in October 1896, after five years as editor and part owner of *Vestkusten*, he sought again the peace and freedom of a forest home. Land was purchased in an isolated area seven miles from Castle Rock, Cowlitz County, Washington. The first task was to build a house. The nearby sawmill provided abundant materials at reasonable prices. Most of the work was done by Ernst. The result was a four-room, story-and-a-half structure which won second prize in a contest sponsored by the *Orange Judd Farmer* to select farm homes with the best designs. An adequate barn and adjacent small building were also constructed. Farmer Skarstedt had again established his family and himself with full expectation that he would live out his years in this sylvan home.<sup>1</sup>

Ernst lived the daily routine of a farmer. There was brush to be cleared and stumps to be dug out. The soil had to be plowed, and when forty long furrows had been turned Ernst considered it a satisfactory day. He harrowed the land and seeded the soil. When harvest time came, the small acreage's produce was ingathered. There were busy days during the lambing season, and considerable anxiety about the flock of sheep that, at times, wandered too far into the forest. There were problems with the setting hens which refused occasionally to carry out their duties, and, when the chicks were hatched, Ernst was occupied with protecting them from the

skunks and rats. Litters of pigs came with unfailing regularity, but, when the time came to bring them to market, loading the reluctant animals was difficult, and once Ernst was bitten by one of the protesters. One large hog produced the neat sum of \$13.20. Ernst was also busy with furnishing wood for the cooking and heating stove. When he summarized this activity, in his diary for the year 1901, he found that he had chopped 17,750 pieces of kindling. The surest cash income came from the churned butter, surplus eggs, and apples that Ernst and Ellen brought regularly to Allen's store in Castle Rock. Occasionally the Skarstedts traded butter and milk with neighbors for other products which these people had in plentiful supply.<sup>2</sup>

Ernst and Ellen in January 1899 made preparations for the arrival of another child. On the fifth of the month, Ernst went with his wife to Castle Rock, where it was arranged that she would stay with Mrs. Benson. The hazardous journey was made over a narrow road through the dense forest during a blinding snowstorm. Ellen rode horseback part of the way, but the heavy snow on the bushes forced her to walk half way down the mountain through a foot of snow. Ernst recorded his great anxiety that day in his diary: "I was so worried I could not think clearly. If something had happened to Ellen, she would have died in the cold and snow before I could return with help." Good fortune accompanied them on their three-and-one-half hour journey of seven miles from their forest home to that of Mrs. Benson. On January 11, Ellen gave birth to a nine and one-half pound daughter who received the name of Martha Sofia. Ernst paid Mrs. Benson \$30.00 for her services during the birth of their daughter.<sup>3</sup>

The early months of 1899 brought the joy of a new daughter, but there were other aspects of life that troubled Ernst. A principal problem was financial. In his diary of March 31 he wrote:

My financial situation is becoming worse and worse. I have no regular income. Olof Peterson has kindly insisted that I take \$50.00 as a token of his gratitude for my telling him about a piece of land that he bought from Pearsons near Vancouver. Andrew Brown has sent me \$6.00 in interest on the \$100.00 I had sent him as surety for the return of Esther when she came to visit me in 1892. My published books brought in \$132 in 1898. But what does that amount to in the context of my expenses on the farm? Ellen has

permitted me to sell her watch and three rings for which she has no need. Brunell gave me \$7.50 for the watch and \$1.75 for the rings. Ernst's attempts to sell a violin for a reasonable price were unsuccessful.

Typical excerpts from Skarstedt's diary record certain activities of his daily life:

October 2, 1900, picked 1½ baskets of apples and filled barrel No. 3 (651 apples). Dug up 2/3 bushels of potatoes; left the rest to rot and be dug up by the sheep and hogs. Walked to Olson's to see the horse that had an infection. Became soaked in the bushes. Went to C. R. [Castle Rock] and played with Mosher and Miss Hayward 9 P.M. to 3¼ A.M. at dance in the new hall for \$2.50 (played for 36 dances). Had a lantern with me and went home at 6 A.M. Froze much. . . . October 8. Rode to Silver Lake and voted the Republican ticket except for Miss Julesburg for superintendent.

Ernst's life in Cowlitz County was described by a Swedish writer in *Göteborgs Aftonblad*: "Surrounded by giant cedars, he lives the strenuous life of a farmer; but when the night sets its darkness over the area, then the author is awake and works late into the night with his literary interests." The writer who observed that the literary interests occupied Skarstedt late into the night was telling the truth.<sup>4</sup>

The first year was occupied largely by building the house and outbuildings. This is obvious from the fact that during the last part of 1896 and during all of 1897, only four newspaper articles were published with Ernst as the author. But the pattern soon changed as a steady stream of articles flowed from his pen. There was great rejoicing at the Skarstedt household and in a much wider area in November 1897, when copies of Skarstedt's important book *Våra pennfåktare* appeared. This 244-page volume contained biographical sketches of more than 300 Swedish American authors plus selections of the poetry of those who used this literary form. The contents had appeared serially in *Vestkusten* beginning on June 25, 1896.<sup>5</sup>

In the period between 1898 and 1901, 136 articles from his pen were mailed from the small post office at Castle Rock to all sections of the United States and Sweden. Twenty-five newspapers and periodicals printed his reflections, criticisms, biographical sketches, historical accounts, and general commentaries. The publishers included nineteen Swedish American newspapers, two American newspapers, with articles in the English language, and four newspapers in Sweden. The subjects ranged from "What is the best farm

dog?" in the *Practical Farmer* to articles on August Strindberg and the Single Tax theory in *Vestkusten*, to reviews of books and comments on music and musicians in several journals.<sup>6</sup> Two major autobiographical writings, *Åderton månaders hundlif* (Eighteen Months of a Dog's Life) and *Sjömanslif* (Life of a Seaman) appeared in *Valkyrian* in 1899 and 1900, the finest Swedish American literary journal which was published in New York.

Although Ernst was busy with the work of a farmer, music teacher, active member of a dance orchestra, extensive contributor to newspapers, and author, he also read many books and pamphlets. He identified ninety-six books by author and title that he had read in 1899 and 1900. Among the better known authors were Fredrika Bremer, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Goldsmith, Goethe, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Scott, R. L. Stevenson, Strindberg, and Turgenev. This reading according to Skarstedt's finding, consisted of 23,205 pages. He had read aloud 22,623 pages for Ellen. In 1901, he read fifty-one volumes. This involved 10,975 pages of which he had read aloud 10,138 pages to Ellen. The more distinguished authors, in addition to some mentioned in 1900, included Balzac, Drummond, Thackeray, and Tolstoy. Since his marriage to Ellen in 1893 he had read 233 books with 49,768 pages to his wife.<sup>7</sup>

Visitors came occasionally to call upon Ernst Skarstedt. One day in July 1901, a reporter from the *Portland Evening Telegram* was assigned to interview Skarstedt, whose reputation as an author was quite well known in Oregon's largest city. This newspaper man was quite intrigued by "the philosopher of the woods," as he called Skarstedt. He observed first of all that "if he were a man easy to talk with, his personality would doubtless be less interesting. He is the most unconventional man one could meet in a lifetime." The reporter then continued his description of Skarstedt: "He listens to the leaves whispering around the corner of his humble little home, and while he gazes upon the singing cascades rehearsing for the grand chorus of the old ocean, he dreams verses. In a narrow little study crammed to the ceiling with books of all kinds he spends hours of thought undisturbed by the far-off crude world." Ernst's visitor further observed overdramatically that his host "would as quickly think of cutting off his right hand as buy new clothes. He is a most devoted disciple of 'plain living.' " Ernst was described as discarding



his woodsman's jacket once a year when he made a trip to Portland. His wife apparently arranged then through a friend for a loan of a coat and vest.<sup>8</sup>

In answer to the reporter's question, "But why did you settle down in an unknown corner of the world?" Ernst replied: "I hate being cooped up. I wanted to be independent, not driven about or ordered by someone else. I wanted to feel that when I felt like work I would work. When I did not feel like working then I wouldn't. I do not like cities. I realize that men in the hives of the cities by some hook or crook achieve their success, such as it is, but I would rather have the fresh green woods of the West to live in." The journalist left the Skarstedt forest home that July day with a new proverb that Ernst Skarstedt had applied to certain newspaper men: "They are," as we say in Sweden, "boiling soup from a nail."<sup>9</sup>

Time was found by Ernst for walking and hiking in the forest-covered landscape of beautiful Cowlitz County. His journal records long walks of from four to eight hours in the midst of the wild country. One day in February 1901, he walked five miles and by actual count the miles required the following number of steps: 1,850; 1,880; 1,883; 1,870; and 1,860. There were several hikes to and along the shores of beautiful Silver Lake seven miles from his home. Since the farmsteads were few in number, a close sense of community developed among the inhabitants, so Ernst and Ellen often visited distant farm homes. His meticulous record keeping provides the data that in 1896, he walked 295 miles; in 1897, the distance was 378 miles; in 1898, he covered 372 miles on foot; in 1899, it was 398; and in 1900, the walking excursions totaled 479 miles. During these years, he traveled 1,947 miles in horse-drawn vehicles.<sup>10</sup>

Skarstedt continued his interest in music, although in 1898 he played only on two occasions at the homes of friends. He performed several times each month in the succeeding years at Castle Rock and in the surrounding area. The locale varied from a saloon to a church. There were private performances in homes and public performances in school houses and public halls. He was the solo performer at a dance, in 1899, which lasted until 2:30 A.M. He played fourteen quadrilles, two polkas, ten waltzes, and one schottish. He was relieved at intervals by a man who played a mouth harp. Ernst was

the violinist in a dance orchestra that was composed also of McCall, piano; Morris, cornet; and Mosher, clarinet. The income from the dance orchestra was an important source of funds. The total proceeds from this activity during the Castle Rock period was \$126.95. On one occasion, he accompanied himself in a public performance on the organ as he sang the songs of Bellman, the famous Swedish composer. There were also occasions when there was variety as his orchestra played at the performance of Sargent's operetta, *The Jolly Farmer*. Skarstedt was quite heavily involved in giving private music lessons during his last year at Castle Rock. His journal indicates that from April to December 1901, he gave 105 lessons in violin, piano, and organ. Each student paid fifty cents per lesson.<sup>11</sup>

Although Ernst liked the beauty of the Castle Rock area, his restlessness together with the unproductiveness of his efforts at farming caused him to seek a change. In October 1901, he sold the wooded area of his property to a Mr. Barnes for \$900 and in December, a Mr. Boogard from Minnesota bought the farm for \$1150. The Skarstedts moved to the San Francisco-Oakland area following a brief stay in the Vancouver-Portland area during February and March 1902. While at Vancouver, he visited with Esther, who taught at the Glenwood School near there. In February 1902, when a smallpox epidemic was threatening, he purchased four doses of a powder from a homeopathic woman physician for \$2 to be used to protect Ellen and himself from smallpox. Ernst was violently opposed to vaccination so this alternative was chosen. This period was also pleasant because it gave him the opportunity to visit frequently with his son Marcus. In March 1902, he attended several musical events in Portland with Marcus, who was becoming a fine violinist. One day when he went to the Hayseth residence where Marcus lived, he gave him the large portrait of Anna, Marcus' mother, which had been painted in Chicago in 1888.<sup>12</sup>

Ellen and Ernst moved to San Francisco in the latter part of March, and, after three months there, they moved to Oakland where they lived for almost nine months in a rented house at 536 Thirty-first Street. Ernst continued to write articles for the Swedish American press, but he also became involved in other activities. Between August 5, 1902, and March 12, 1903, he was the director of

the Danish Singing Society in Oakland. He received \$2 for each of the weekly rehearsals. In June 1902, he bought a second-hand bookstore from a Mr. Brooke. Whether or not there was any direct connection, Ernst's diary records that two days earlier he had consulted a palmist, who according to Ernst, "said a great deal that impressed me. He stated among other things, that I am slow in grasping opportunities." Ernst paid just under \$300 for Brooke's bookstore. On June 30, after four days of business, the new owner recorded that he sold books for \$10.63, purchased books for \$3.45, paid his assistant, Miss Soule, \$1.50, bought a lock and nails for \$.70, and expended \$6.40 for insurance, notary public fees, and recording. One day, he had sold sixty old law books for 6½ cents each. A friend, Barkman, was distressed, saying they should have brought \$2-3 each. On good days his sales amounted to \$4. The restlessness of Ernst as he traveled to seek books and to visit friends made it necessary for Ellen to spend much time at the bookstore.<sup>13</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt would scarcely be considered a forceful salesman. One day when Fredrik Larsson was in the store, a customer made inquiry about the availability of a certain volume. Skarstedt readily found a copy and put it in the hands of the customer. The man then asked Skarstedt what he thought of the book. When Skarstedt forcefully told him that he thought that it was a poorly written volume on an uninteresting subject, the prospective customer decided not to buy the book. Ernst soon realized that this business enterprise would not succeed. Late in August 1902, he sold the bookstore to Mr. Angel for \$350. Ernst suffered a modest financial loss together with the loss of several volumes from his private library.<sup>14</sup>

The desire of Skarstedt to return to the life of a farmer was demonstrated when he enrolled in a course in agriculture at the University of California, Berkeley, October 8 to December 28, 1902. He attended a series of 137 lectures on physics and chemistry of soils, fertilizers, grasses and forage plants, plant propagation, economic entomology, milk and its products, breeds and breeding. The course also provided field trips to farms, dairies, and other agricultural enterprises.<sup>15</sup>

After having lived in the San Francisco-Oakland area for about a year, the Skarstedts moved in March 1903, to Laton, Fresno County,

California. Ernst purchased a forty acre farm near Laton paying down \$450 in cash. He entered energetically into life in the new locale. He first arranged to have a well dug near the site for the proposed house. He contacted two carpenters at Laton, Akhers and Hoover from Kansas, and agreed upon the terms for their employment. Arrangements were made for delivering lumber and other materials that were required. The foundation was laid, the outer structure was raised, doors and windows were added, shingles were nailed down. The plain frame house, twelve feet by twenty feet, was divided into two rooms for a family of four. The house was simply furnished with one bed, two tables, and a few chairs. Rows of book shelves were built in one room to house his library. Outbuildings were constructed for livestock and storage. The family moved to the farm in early April, after residing in Kingsburg, ten miles from Laton.<sup>16</sup>

The Skarstedts then set about equipping the farm. In April Ernst bought two horses, harness, and a plow for \$180. Earlier he had purchased an old buggy for \$20. He soon acquired two cows for \$90, two four-month-old pigs for \$10, and a flock of chickens. Ernst worked hard to prepare the soil for farming. Some land had been plowed, and he, together with a man named Rudolph, plowed additional acreage. On April 14, Ernst recorded in his diary that he had harrowed the whole day, covering a distance of forty-four strips with a length of one-fourth mile each and the next day his efforts at harrowing covered thirty-eight strips of similar length. The next assignment was to prepare the land for irrigation. The old ditch was cleaned and new lead ditches were dug. On May 19 water was let in but there were problems because the slope was not adequate so additional work had to be done. As the weeks passed, Ernst plowed additional acreage. On August 22 he recorded in his diary that the plowing was concluded. The last twelve acres had required 336 furrows or twenty-eight per acre. Later he planted oats, rye, wheat, and alfalfa.<sup>17</sup>

Ernst was struggling with the problems of irrigating his land in the early part of 1904. There were breaks in the ditches, with too much water in some places, and not enough elsewhere. Ernst was frustrated with this new way of life, but he did his best. One day Allison, a representative of the irrigation company, came belatedly to

advise Ernst. He sent a Swede by the name of Larson, "the ditch tender," who spent much time on Ernst's farm and aided him substantially in making the irrigation system function better. In May Ernst recorded favorable developments. Larson, the irrigation company employee, told Ernst that the Skarstedt farm had the best new alfalfa that he had seen that year. However, some of the crops were damaged by persistent weeds that took over the young plants. The attempt to lead water to a parched rye field was unsuccessful.<sup>18</sup>

In May 1904 Ernst and a man named Kester began harvesting the crops. Kester hauled twenty-four loads of alfalfa to the Skarstedt barnyard and two loads to his own place as partial compensation for his services. The harvesting of the rye and wheat was not productive. The reason for the failure of these crops was soon disclosed. In June, Larson, the "ditch tender" who had been so very helpful, advised Ernst that it would perhaps be best for him to give up the place, since there was too much alkali. Four days later Ernst was in Berkeley at the agricultural college of the University of California, where he had taken a short course in 1902, with four samples of soil from his farm. Professor Shaw told Ernst that it was his impression that the soil had too much alkali. Ernst now was confronted with a serious problem. His interest in developing the farm soon became minimal.<sup>19</sup>

Although the Laton years were strenuous, Ernst's diary describes many pleasant times when Ellen and Ernst shared the fellowship of friends and their own family circle. Kingsburg was only ten miles distant which was the residence of the Reverend and Mrs. C. M. Esbjörn, dear friends from San Francisco days. The Swedish colony at Kingsburg included, in addition to the Esbjörns, the Hansons, Rosendahls, Rycéns, and many others where the Skarstedts were welcome guests at mealtime and overnight. Moreover, the relations with the neighbors were excellent. Ernst enjoyed playing dances and duets with natives as well as visitors, including a piano agent and a Mexican laborer, who played the guitar. Mellie was seven and Martha was four when the family moved to the Laton farm, so Ellen and Ernst became involved in school functions. On February 22, 1905, Vera was born, and Ernst was the typical husband, waiting for the news as he wandered aimlessly around the farm, or stood impatiently in the barn, "restless and afraid" as he described his

feeling, until Mrs. Reed, a neighbor, told him of the arrival of an 8½ pound daughter.<sup>20</sup>

The Skarstedt children enjoyed a pleasant life. Ernst's forthright diary records no problems of discipline, although in August 1904, he expressed great regret that Ellen and he were having difficulty in getting Mellie and Martha accustomed to speaking Swedish when the two of them were together. The children explored interesting areas—the woods, the irrigation ditches, and the prairie area. Mellie learned to ride horseback early and soon Martha attained that skill as Frank and Fred, the gentle horses, enjoyed carrying such light loads. The girls were delighted when they received their first red wagon. One day in June 1904, a Mexican family came to the Skarstedt farm to buy one-half gallon of milk, and when they left, the Skarstedt daughters received a little cat. Mellie said: "My cat mustn't fight with the *främmad* [strange] cat" and then Martha observed: "The *främmad* cat *fråsed* [hissed]." There were exciting times too, when the Skarstedts went to the small circus or carnival that came once a year to Laton, and there they rode the merry-go-round. Christmas Eve was a festive time when Ernst put on a mask with a white beard, which Ellen had provided, and covered himself with a sheet as the children shared in the Santa Claus tradition.<sup>21</sup>

Ernst was the father of six children, Esther, Marcus, and Wilma, in the marriage with Anna who died in 1888, and of Mellie, Martha, and Vera. Ernst and Ellen apparently sought to keep intact the family spirit of the Skarstedt children. In May 1905, nine-year-old Mellie wrote to Esther, the oldest of the Skarstedt children: "Dear Esther, I will write a little letter to you. I want you to come down and see me. And see what I play. Have you seen Mamma's baby and Martha holds it sometimes when Mamma [is] busy. I have many friends around here. I go to school. My teacher's name is Mrs. J. W. Malone. I hold the baby sometimes. I wish you would come down. My dear sister Esther from your dear Mellie."<sup>22</sup>

There were always friends and admireres who beat a path to Ernst's door, and to them, later generations are indebted for much information. In July 1904 O. S. Assar, the Swedish music critic, came to see Ernst Skarstedt in his farm home at Laton in the company of Alex Olsson, the editor and publisher of *Vestkusten*. Assar recalled the unpleasantness of the terrible heat and the

energetic activities of millions of mosquitoes, whose home base was the nearby Kings River. Nature seemed unkind in this dry and desolate area. But when he entered the simple frame house and met Ernst Skarstedt, all was changed. The farmer-author exceeded all the visitor's high expectations as he heard Skarstedt's informed and interesting comments on men and events, upon the past and future. He observed that one room was devoted to books, pamphlets, and clippings. Hundreds of volumes were piled on the floor along the walls of the room. But there seemed to be order in the midst of the encompassing disorder as Skarstedt picked out volumes and read from them to the interested visitor. Soon Ernst and his violin became the center of attention. The visitor was enthralled as his host played a series of Swedish folk melodies. He reflected on the contrast with former days as this unique son of Professor C. W. Skarstedt of Lund shared his musical talent in a room filled with books in a small frame house some six thousand miles away from the land of his birth.<sup>23</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt was quite busy with his farm work during the Laton period, but his facile pen continued to produce many newspaper articles largely for the Swedish American press. His principal outlet was *Svenska Tribunen*, Chicago, where he contributed regularly to a column called *Från Vestkusten* (From the West Coast), *Vestkusten*, San Francisco, where his regular contribution was listed *För Dagen* (For Today), and *Nordstjernen*. More than 400 of Skarstedt's newspaper articles were published during the Laton years. His diary contains frequent references to writing until 2 A.M. Sometimes he wrote long articles as he enjoyed a drink in the saloon at Laton.<sup>24</sup>

The newspaper articles which Ernst Skarstedt wrote from his farm home reflect a wide range of interests. Moreover, he entered into an era during which his writings related more directly to great issues than heretofore. In 1903 he attacked Henry George's Single-Tax ideas:

Among all the worlds do-good plans, which have appeared in more or less the muddle-headed brains of certain men, is scarcely any plan more comical than the single-tax teaching with all of its baroque promises built on completely untenable principles. Thousands have troubled their brains in the attempt to come to clarity with Henry George's fantasies but with the Holy Simpleton they must acknowledge that it is hard for them to conceive what no person can understand.

Skarstedt's objection to the single-tax theory was that it violated the facts of the market place, that it sought to create an artificial economic situation, and that it would destroy individual initiative which he viewed as the chief source of economic progress.<sup>25</sup> The hostility of Ernst Skarstedt toward socialism rested primarily upon his belief that the premise of equality, upon which it was based, was a false premise. He wrote, "That the concept of equality has no justification in creation, as we have learned to know it, will not be contested by any thinking person. Neither within the world of animal or plant life is there equality. The only equality that one can think of in the world of men is equality before the law. In matters of knowledge, talent, feelings, achievement, thought, and taste, men can never become equal." Skarstedt was a severe critic also of labor unions. He observed, "It is hard to understand what the labor unions really have as a goal when one considers their insane agitation."<sup>26</sup>

Skarstedt was an early champion of the rights of women. In 1905 he condemned the long period of time in which women's condition of dependence and subordination to men had prevailed as well as the tragic fact that full rights of citizenship were denied presently to women. He recounted with impatience the great tardiness with which women's talents and capabilities were recognized and rewarded. Although he was pleased that women's role in professional life was steadily improving, he lamented the slow rate of progress which was not commensurate with the rightness of the cause. He observed, "Much yet needs to be changed and wrong made right, but we are on the way to a better situation. Progress, which moves steadily, leads step by step in the right direction, and it is not a cause for complaint but of rejoicing that a forward thrust is made in many areas so that both male and female intelligence will come into their full rights." He was enthusiastic in his praise of Susan B. Anthony, leader of the American women's suffrage movement, writing that, "Her life-work is magnificent, and remembrances of her will never fade as long as any feeling of equity and equality is found in mankind."<sup>27</sup>

Although Ernst Skarstedt lived rather isolated on his farm near Laton, he was fully aware of technological changes and he responded to them. He observed with interest the experiments of Wilbur and



Orville Wright who produced the world's first powered flight in December 1903, at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. In the article, "When Mankind Begins to Fly," in *Nordstjernen*, he predicted: "Man can expect most important results from these experiments in the immediate future. This is not just a spectacular development but it should make us fully aware of the thought that we stand on the threshold of a new era in the means of transportation." As he contemplated the potential of air travel he hoped that it would become an instrument of peace. He envisioned, however, the likelihood of establishing "flying police" to pursue and capture robbers, murderers, and anarchists who would use airplanes as a means of escape from the scene of their crimes. Ernst had little fear of crashes in mid-air, especially in the United States, where the space seemed almost unlimited, but he urged that plans be made to build more sturdy houses and other structures to protect the occupants from falling airplanes. Although he saw great possibilities for air travel, he concluded his comments by stating that he "did not in the least have great personal interest in these developments."<sup>28</sup>

The early years of the twentieth century witnessed the development of automobiles which became for that century what railroads had been for the nineteenth century. In 1901, 425 Oldsmobiles were sold, a number that increased to 5,000 three years later. Although Ernst was interested in this new motive power, he expressed considerable skepticism about its use: "No person who walks or drives other vehicles is so inconsiderate and unmannerly as the drivers of automobiles, who as a rule are wealthy and leading persons in a community, from whom one has the right to expect more than from others when it comes to intelligence and conduct." Moreover, he had some doubts about the use of automobiles generally: "Let's get rid not only of drunk drivers but also of automobiles on our roads. Automobiles do not belong to the class of vehicles for which roads are adapted. They belong to the same class as locomotives and electric trolleys for which special rails are built. Country roads are suitable only for vehicles that are pulled by horses and for the use of people who have consideration for their fellow men and their rights."<sup>29</sup> Ernst Skarstedt rode occasionally in an automobile, but he was never an owner of such a vehicle.

The preoccupation with food and health was a persistent aspect

of the life of Ernst Skarstedt. He was intermittently a vegetarian, and when he failed to maintain that resolve, he had a feeling of guilt. He opposed drinking coffee as detrimental to health. When Horace Fletcher advocated what became known as "Fletcherism," namely chewing food so thoroughly that it "swallowed itself," Ernst became a disciple pointing out, "Many people have tested the practicality of his idea and found that he is right." He further observed that William E. Gladstone, the famous nineteenth-century British prime minister, was a "Fletcherite" although he had never heard of Fletcher. After examining the evidence, Skarstedt concluded that "Fletcherism is by no means an empty whim nor a preconceived idea but a scientifically correct adaptation of well-founded hygienic rules."<sup>30</sup>

Skarstedt was skeptical of medicine and the response of people to real or alleged illness. He observed, in 1904, that a few years ago half of the population had "la grippe." "No one, as was pointed out, was not so poor that he couldn't give his sniffles a French name. How does it happen that no one has this illness now? It is simply that people got tired of having it." Later there was great interest in microbes, bacteria, and bacilli and their effect on health. But, he observed: "Apparently our forefathers had illnesses caused by organisms, but since they did not know these terms they were not concerned and lived into advanced years in the midst of great hardships. Now there is less concern again about microbes and related scientific terminology." The current fad now is appendicitis: "A few years ago we did not know we were equipped with this appendage in our bodies. Soon we will hear very little about appendicitis."<sup>31</sup>

Although Ernst was skeptical about certain aspects of medicine, he had great interest in experiments designed to aid man. He contended that the forties were the best age for human beings, and hence he lamented the excessive years of youth and old age. He concluded that "the individual who could extend by a decade the length of the middle years, which without question are the finest years, would render mankind an invaluable service." He was pleased that Professor Metchnikoff of the Pasteur Institute in Paris thought this could be done by using a serum which would give the microphages greater resources in their battle with bacilli and through the use of another serum which would give the macrophages greater

strength.<sup>32</sup>

The issues related to racial prejudice were of great concern to Ernst Skarstedt. In October 1906, when American newspapers were reporting the persecution of Jews in Russia, which he lamented, the opportunity was used to remind Americans of racism toward Negroes in certain southern states, especially in Georgia at that time, and toward the Chinese in Pacific Coast states. After describing the sad state of prejudice and persecution, he wrote: "That the United States should be a home for the oppressed, a safe harbor for all who are persecuted, has been impressed upon Americans from childhood. However, racism is intensively directed against the Chinese in the Pacific Coast states. . . . 'Dear Uncle Sam, before you protest against another nation's moral dirt, be good and clean before your own door.' " Later, he lamented the situation, when in the spring of 1907, three Negro delegates of the Christian Endeavor Society at a national meeting in the Lincoln Hotel, in Seattle, were denied rooms. He thought this was a strange response for a hotel with the Great Emancipator's name and he criticized the other delegates for staying there after this incident. He then observed: "Racism is positively not right in America. The American Republic has been viewed from its origin as the land of freedom, as the home of the rights of man. . . . True republicans cannot under any conditions approve the actions which are being taken by a large number of demagogues and misled workers on the West Coast of America who have as their goal to humiliate and insult Japanese and Chinese residents."<sup>33</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt declined the opportunity to gain a university education. He shared with his readers, however, some very decisive feelings about this field of learning. He lamented the general nature of the studies which had replaced the discipline required by Latin, Greek, and mathematics. He acknowledged that differential calculus would not be essential for most life situations, but the discipline of the study would be meaningful. Entrance requirements for enrollment at the universities should be high. He contended that universities were designed for "gifted students who are dedicated to learning and not for the hammering of knowledge into blockheads or for the education of football players, athletes, and yell leaders, whose highest ambition is to be able to produce terrible Indian shouts of the kind that are called 'college yells' or so that some

football player may cripple a fellow player or in some other way show his inherent coarseness. These people ought never to be permitted to defile a university hall of learning with their presence."<sup>34</sup>

Since Ernst realized that the soil on his farm contained too much alkali for intensive farming, it was only a matter of time until the Skarstedts would move elsewhere. Early in April 1905 he discussed with Mr. Blanchard at Laton the possibility of selling his farm. In August a man from Iowa looked at the land but no purchase resulted since he thought that the requested price of \$55 per acre was too high. Other prospective buyers made casual inquiries, but it was not until November 15, that a Mr. Stutz of Oakland bought the farm for \$58 per acre. The abstract and title were finally cleared and the settlement was made in January 1906. The indebtedness on the farm was paid off. Ernst has summarized the situation: "The first year we did not get any water, and when we got it, I found that my place was partly ruined by alkali. I found, also, that it was impossible for me to get used to the hot summers. I became at last so weak that I could not do any work and was glad to find a buyer, although I had to sell at a sacrifice. I had then lived on the place three years."<sup>35</sup>

Once again the Skarstedts must change their place of abode. The plan to rent a farm in the area came to naught because the owner claimed that he had promised the farm previously to another party. February was a busy month. The livestock was sold to neighbors. Friends purchased the implements, tools, lamps, lantern, and Ellen's sewing machine. It was a sad day for Mellie and Martha especially when Bird, their greatly loved dog, was left at Kelleys. Mr. Kelley gave the children fifty cents and promised to take good care of their pet. Ernst's many books, pictures, clippings, and scrapbooks were carefully boxed and dispatched to San Francisco. On February 13, Eva Reed, a neighbor, came in the Reed surrey to take the family to Laton. In Fresno, they stayed with friends and attended a meeting at the Swedish Lutheran Church, when Dr. Gustav Andreen, president of Augustana College and Theological Seminary, was the speaker and Ernst played two violin solos. The Skarstedts arrived in San Francisco, on February 16, 1906, destined to face another trial in a life characterized often by uncertainty and difficulty.<sup>36</sup>

When Ernst Skarstedt sold his farm and left Laton he was at least, figuratively speaking, a vagabond until in December of that year when he settled at Columbia City, near Seattle. His journal for that period shows twelve different places of residence ranging from one week to two months stay. The usual rented accomodation was a furnished room or a room with kitchen privileges when the Skarstedts were not staying with friends. This was a difficult time economically, because Ernst's income depended primarily on his modest earnings as a correspondent for Swedish American newspapers.<sup>37</sup>

The first residence was San Francisco, where the Skarstedts had a furnished room at 1035 Mission Street between February 16 and April 18, 1906. Since the Skarstedts had no permanent residence at that time, the large collection of books, letters, clippings, and other personal items had been brought to San Francisco and placed in storage. This would be only a casual fact except for the tragic events that occurred in San Francisco on April 18. Skarstedt has written a detailed account of being awakened suddenly about 5:15 A.M. by the rumbling, terrifying noise of a destructive earthquake. Although the quake wreaked its havoc for only forty-seven seconds, it seemed to Ernst that it must have been four or five minutes. When the violent onslaught stopped, he jumped out of bed, dressed hurriedly, and rushed outside. A scene of ruin and havoc confronted him everywhere. The San Francisco opera house was completely destroyed and the tangled mass of debris was piled high in the street. The two lower stories of a three-story building had sunk into a huge hole. The trolley tracks were bent to form huge bows. Every building in the area was either completely destroyed or seriously damaged. Rumors were rampant, without any possible basis in fact, that Oakland, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, and New York had been destroyed by earthquakes.<sup>38</sup>

As Ernst and Ellen surveyed the terrible destruction and heard the distress of people wandering aimlessly in the street calling for dear ones who would never answer, a new threat appeared upon the near horizon. Huge billows of smoke rolled closer and closer as fires followed the destruction of gas mains and electrical installations. The Skarstedts rushed into their rooms on the ground floor of the frame dwelling on Mission Street and dragged out two small trunks and a

few personal belongings. Fortunately, they were able to load these items on a passing wagon by paying the driver ten dollars.<sup>39</sup>

The Skarstedts first sought safety in the home of a friend, but the advancing flames drove them and their hosts with their meager possessions to Golden Gate Park. They huddled together there with thousands of others with only a small amount of food and water for two days and two nights. The light from the blazing fires kept darkness from blacking out the scene. Their ears were bombarded by the steady blasts of dynamite as city officials, supported by the United States Army, sought to contain the fierce flames by dynamiting large rows of houses and other buildings. The flames raged unabatedly for three days. At least one-fourth of San Francisco was in ruins. Ernst was a spectator to the destruction of large sections on both sides of the fashionable Market Street area.<sup>40</sup>

When a measure of quiet and order was restored, the count of the dead reached into the hundreds and the loss of property into hundreds of millions of dollars. Ernst Skarstedt had no real estate to lose, but his loss was even more precious and personal. The largest part of his fine library was in the basement storage of a large building and was forever buried with the debris. Many rare volumes were in a book bindery that was completely destroyed by fire. Ernst accounted by author and title for 1,100 volumes that were lost. Included in that loss were thirty-two volumes of bound periodicals, twenty bound volumes containing about 5,000 letters, his paintings, photographs, and thousands of clippings. The earthquake and fire had consumed nineteen scrapbooks and thirteen manuscript volumes of his own poetry and copies of poems assembled across the years. Fortunately, one of the two trunks that Ernst and Ellen Skarstedt dragged to safety from the flames contained Ernst's diaries and journals.<sup>41</sup>

Ernst and Ellen Skarstedt were among the thousands of refugees whose pattern of life was violently disrupted by the events which began with the great earthquake early on April 18, 1906. Their financial situation at best was precarious, and the possibility of a more permanent residence, and possible employment on the newspaper, *Vestkusten*, was now impossible. The printing presses and the building that housed *Vestkusten* were reduced to ashes and debris. Although the paper continued in production on a more modest scale

than heretofore, there was no prospect for adding personnel. Fortunately, the Skarstedts had friends, Mr. and Mrs. Pontus Franklin, who lived at Piedmont, a few miles northeast of Oakland. There they made their headquarters temporarily, later living with friends in Washington and Oregon. They finally settled at Columbia City in the Seattle area in December 1906.<sup>42</sup>

## X

# A DECADE OF UNCERTAINTY

When the Skarstedts took up residence in Columbia City in December 1906, they began a settled life that lasted until May 1912. The Skarstedts lived in a modest two-room house at 5013 Thirty-second Avenue South. Ernst had many friends in Seattle and Tacoma so there were many occasions for conversation and conviviality. Moreover, in April 1907, an event of special importance occurred.

The great personal loss that Ernst incurred as a result of the San Francisco earthquake and fire provided the occasion for the fiftieth birthday surprise party that friends and admirers carried out successfully for him at Seattle. The initiative for a nation-wide effort among Swedish Americans to honor the greatest name in Swedish American literary and journalistic circles was taken by Alex Olsson, editor and publisher of *Vestkusten*, and Dr. August Fehlen, a San Francisco physician. The leading force in the arrangements at Seattle was Tobias Sandegren, editor of *Tacoma-Posten*. Since the friends of Ernst Skarstedt knew that it would never be possible to have him present at a public event if the purpose of honoring him was known, an acceptable subterfuge was planned and executed. The announced purpose of the gathering at the Swedish Club of Seattle that Sunday evening, April 14, 1907, was the first meeting of the Swedish West Coast Artists' Club. Ernst Skarstedt's presence was based upon the invitation that he should read one of his poems as part of the program.<sup>1</sup>



When Tobias Sandegren took his position on the platform as master of ceremonies, he gave a cordial welcome to the large crowd, then successively presented for performance the Svea men's chorus; Professor Olof Bull, violinist; Mrs. Adolph Edgren, soprano soloist; and finally Ernst Skarstedt for a "Declamation." When Ernst had taken his seat following his presentation, Sandegren then appropriately and proudly declared the real purpose of the meeting, namely, to honor Ernst Skarstedt, their friend, the greatest name in Swedish American literary life, a champion of freedom, independence, and integrity. But Sandegren could not finish his speech at that time for the following valid reasons described by him:

When Skarstedt understood that the festive meeting was in his honor, he got up from his chair near the stage and cast confused glances behind in order to ascertain if there was any way to escape. He realized that he could not get away through the crowd of people. He then looked at the windows but he found that they were too high so he could not jump out. Then his glance fell on the side entrance to the stage. Jumping forward, he was at the door in a moment and disappeared like an arrow through it.

A member of the committee rushed after Ernst, and since there was no means of escape in the stage area, he reluctantly returned to his chair, sitting with his head in his hands.<sup>2</sup>

The master of ceremonies then continued with his tribute to Ernst Skarstedt, who continued to sit with his head in his hands. Finally, Sandegren walked over to Ernst and presented him with a gift of \$789.60 in behalf of friends and admirers in Swedish communities throughout America. Sandegren reported that in the midst of great silence Ernst Skarstedt arose and said: "If I had known about this, I would be in Portland or some other place, at least a hundred miles from here. It is good that something like this can only happen once every fifty years, and I hope that I never will be one hundred years old, although my old father, who is more than ninety, seems to have the strength to be that old." Then Sandegren observed: "Meanwhile, Skarstedt received this beautiful tribute from his countrymen from near and far with overwhelming feelings of joy and gratitude shining clearly through his tear-filled eyes."<sup>3</sup>

Although Ernst was not employed as a full-time journalist during the Columbia City years, he was kept very busy writing for Swedish American newspapers. Almost 350 articles were written on

many subjects and nearly one-half of them were published in *Nordstjernen*, New York, a newspaper that Ernst edited as his last formal assignment in the 1920s. His column, "*Från ett till ett annat*," which became famous in Swedish American journalism, began to appear regularly in January 1912. The data shows that Ernst's activities as a correspondent fell off substantially in 1910 and 1911 when he became involved in research and writing.<sup>4</sup>

One volume of Skarstedt's poetry and three regional histories appeared during the years at Columbia City. In November 1907, *Vestliga skyar* was published. This volume contained sixty-four of Skarstedt's poems in the Swedish language. This collection emphasizes the American West as the title suggests. The author published these poems in book form and presented a copy to each contributor to his fiftieth birthday fund as an expression of gratitude. The three regional histories represented an immense amount of research and field work in the successful attempt to recount the contributions of Swedish immigrants to life in the Pacific Coast area.

Skarstedt initiated these studies with the state he knew best in the volume, *Washington och dess svenska befolkning* (Washington and Its Swedish Population) which was published in July 1908. He was assisted in the field work and promotional effort by F. W. Lönegren, later a well-known Portland editor. The 588 pages with 381 illustrations provided a general background history of Washington, a factual portrayal of Swedish communities, churches, and organizations, and a representative section of biographies of Swedish Americans. The format of the three regional studies was identical, and in each publication the author was doing pioneer work which has given to succeeding generations an invaluable and not otherwise available source of information. *California och dess svenska befolkning* was published early in 1910. He was ably assisted by Emil Högberg and Captain Eric Johnson. The readers were given a comprehensive historical and biographical study in 463 pages with 200 illustrations. The last of the trilogy, *Oregon och dess svenska befolkning* accomplished the same results for Oregon as had been done for Washington and California. This was a smaller volume of 220 pages with 381 illustrations, published in 1911. The author in the foreword recognized that the volume on Oregon was not as complete as the histories of Washington and California but he

attributed this fact to the opposition and lack of cooperation that prevailed among certain Swedes in Oregon.

The travel schedule of Ernst Skarstedt in the period 1908-11, when he was collecting materials and interviewing people for the three volumes on California, Washington, and Oregon, was overwhelming. He made what a later generation calls field trips to every section of the three states where Swedish immigrants had settled. He not only took extensive notes but enriched the volumes with his photographs. He traveled more than six thousand miles in each of the years, exclusive of 1910, when the trip to Rock Island, Illinois, extended the distance to more than 11,000 miles. Every trip was carefully identified as to destination, method of travel, date, miles, and often his companions were listed. After a busy day, he would sit up far into the night recording his findings about people, institutions, and communities. Once again the immense physical energy of Ernst Skarstedt is apparent.

In spite of heavy involvement in writing and publishing he, as usual, allotted much time to music. He was a regular member of E. P. Valleen's orchestra. The principal engagements of this musical group were at dances for various clubs and organizations. He usually received \$4 for each engagement which lasted far into the night. The Swedish Club of Seattle hired the orchestra to play at a festive Midsummer Day picnic and dance at Manitou Park in June 1907. When the audience sang, *Du gamla, du fria, du fjällhöga nord*, the Swedish national anthem, which describes the desire to live and to die in the beautiful Northland, Ernst did not join in the singing. When asked about his silence, he replied: "I do not want either to live or to die in the North, it is too cold. I want to live and die in Puget Sound."<sup>5</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt in June 1910 made a sentimental journey to the East with Chicago as the farthest destination. He was thrilled by the spectacular scenery on the route of the Canadian Pacific which took him through British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and finally to Minneapolis. He was enthralled by the great contrast between the mountain peaks which rose like giant church spires to a height of 6,000 feet above him and the vast productive prairies. At Minneapolis he visited with Alfred Söderström, one of the founders of *Svenska Folkets Tidning*, author of an excellent

volume on the Swedish American press, and with Swan Turnblad, publisher of *Svenska Amerikanska Posten*. But his range of contacts included other than orthodox newspaper publishers. He was a guest of Charles Erik Borglund and Edward Grunlund, publishers of the interesting and radical journal, *Forskaren*, and of Magnhild Anderson (Viola), publisher of *Nya Idun*, a periodical with a strong religious emphasis.<sup>6</sup>

A major purpose of the trip was to attend the commencement exercises at Augustana College where his son Marcus was the valedictorian of his class. When he arrived at Rock Island on June 8, he was met at the railroad station by Marcus, Professor Olof Grafström, an old friend whom he had not seen since 1893, and by O. A. Linder, editor of *Svenska Amerikanaren*, whom he had last met two decades earlier. Ernst was justly proud of his son who worked his way through Augustana and, in addition, was the top scholar in the graduating class. Marcus continued his distinguished career as librarian at Augustana College and of the Evanston, Illinois, Public Library, before earning his doctorate in mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley. He was successively professor of mathematics and librarian at Whittier College, librarian and acting president, City College of San Francisco, and head of the mathematics department, George Fox College, Oregon. Former President Richard Nixon was a student of his at Whittier College.<sup>7</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's stay in Rock Island was a happy time because it gave him the opportunity to see old friends and to meet people known to him through correspondence. There were pleasant visits with Dr. C. M. Esbjörn and the Reverend Philip Andreen, old friends from earlier years in California, and with Dr. Josua Lindahl, his former teacher and friend in Lund. He enjoyed meeting Dr. Eric Norelius, one of the four pioneer founders of the Augustana Lutheran Synod which had been such a great religious and cultural force among Swedish immigrants. He also shared his literary interests with Anna Olsson, E. W. Olson, Ludvig Holmes, Anders Schön, and others. He attended many lectures in connection with the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Augustana Synod and was enthusiastic about the rendition of Handel's *The Messiah*.<sup>8</sup>

Ernst arrived in Chicago on June 12 for a delightful visit that lasted more than two weeks. He was astounded by the changes that

had taken place since his last stay there in the 1880s. Where small frame buildings had stood, the visitor gazed in wonder at towering skyscrapers. No longer were open spaces to be found in the area known so well to him, and trolley cars seemed to run everywhere. The windy city distressed him at the outset:

During the first days of my visit in Chicago I experienced a feeling of suffocation and agony amidst the noise of the streets each time I elbowed myself forward through a mass of people, overwhelmed as I was by the unbearable, unending racket of the onrushing elevated cars above me and by the counterbalancing noise from the streetcars, all this magnified by the echo from the walls of houses, iron pillars, stone pavements, etc. There was such a crowding of people at the street crossings that it could drive one crazy.<sup>9</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt soon overcame the bewilderment of big city life as he visited with old friends. The great names in the Swedish American journalistic and literary tradition—Jakob Bonggren, the poet, O. A. Linder, Johan Person, F. A. Lindstrand (Onkel Ola), Alex Johnson, editors and publishers—were hosts at a variety of occasions. He reminisced about his early life in America with Emil Lundquist, his associate in the publication of *Kansas Stats-Tidning* at Lindsborg, Kansas. He visited museums and attended theatrical performances and concerts. One day, he was part of a crowd of 30,000 Swedes who celebrated Midsummer's day on a gala occasion thirty miles from Chicago. Although he rejoiced in the company of old friends, there were times when he shared great sadness since "the great destroyer" had taken good friends—Carl Gustaf Linderborg, Andrew Chaiser, Ninian Waerner, Ville Åkerberg, Samuel Lyckberg, Pastor Hedman and others—whose portraits were nevertheless alive in the temple of memory. He recalled his life in the little cottages in Chicago and Wilmette where Anna was his great inspiration. Joy and sadness were blended as Ernst Skarstedt left Chicago for Kansas City on June 30.<sup>10</sup>

The stay in Kansas City with an old friend, Ekdahl, was brief. He was impressed with the long lines of people from dry Kansas who crossed the state line regularly into Missouri to whet their thirst at twenty saloons on the border. His destination was Lindsborg, where he was met at the Union Pacific railroad station by G. N. Malm, artist and author, whose guest he was at Malm's villa, *Norrmalm*. Once again Ernst Skarstedt met people from his first year

in America thirty or more years ago. He was distressed to find saddlemaker Holm ill and crippled. He had a pleasant visit with C. R. Carlson, his leading antagonist from former years. He roamed over the Fallquist farm northwest of Lindsborg where he had been employed as a farm laborer. He met several new and interesting people—Birger Sandzén, the artist; Hagbard Brase and Oscar Thorsén, musicians; President E. F. Pihlblad—all associated with Bethany College; Dr. Alf. Bergin, Dr. Carl Swensson's successor as pastor of Bethany Church; and B. G. Gröndal, the photographer, who had advised him in the 1880s by letter about the art of photography.<sup>11</sup>

Skarstedt's stay in Lindsborg included a festive Fourth of July celebration in the Bethany College Park and a first experience for him after more than three decades in America, namely, being a spectator at a baseball game. He described his response as follows: "A great wonderment was aroused in me why the Mr. Baseball Players were willing and able in the great heat to run and fling themselves around in such a ridiculous manner." As he walked around in Lindsborg he reflected about the changes since 1879. Lindsborg was then a dreary place with only a few stores and frame houses. Now there was a beautiful city with a flourishing business district, tree-lined streets, fine houses surrounded by flowers and shrubs, and well-known Bethany College with its great cultural outreach. He remembered young Pastor Carl Swensson who arrived in Lindsborg the same year as Ernst Skarstedt. Swensson was the creator of the present Lindsborg with its great resources of learning and culture. When Ernst left Lindsborg, he took with him water colors and lithographs by Birger Sandzén and G. N. Malm and remembrances of many events and people including the happy occasion when the Bethany Male Chorus sang a concert in his honor and President Ernst F. Pihlblad of Bethany College saluted him in behalf of the community for his distinctive literary achievements.<sup>12</sup>

Skarstedt's final stop before reaching the West Coast was Williams, Arizona, and the Grand Canyon. As he stood before this great miracle of nature, he was speechless. He was overwhelmed by the grandeur and majesty but he was also intrigued by the forces that had created this greatness. Instead of staying overnight in the hotel on the edge of the Grand Canyon, he shared a tent with a Swede whom he had met on the train. This man approached Skarstedt and

addressed him by name, contending that as a spiritualist, the spirits had identified Skarstedt for him. Ernst had a more realistic appraisal: the stranger had seen his photograph in a Swedish American newspaper. The Swedish spiritualist had been a gold digger in Alaska but he was now a successful businessman in New York. His attempts to convince Ernst of the alleged truths of spiritualism were unsuccessful. The thick volume on metaphysics that he later sent to Skarstedt was not read by him because he could not understand it. Skarstedt had one unpleasant experience at the Grand Canyon. As he was hiking alone in the Bright Angel area, some tourists thought he was a robber. Apparently his shaggy hair and long beard, plus his rather baggy trousers and slouch hat, caused the overly cautious visitors to make a completely erroneous assessment of a fellow tourist. It seemed incredible to Skarstedt that he, "the most peaceful among the peaceful should be considered a robber."<sup>13</sup>

The trip from the Grand Canyon to San Francisco was uneventful except that the temperature varied from 104 degrees on the California desert to 54 degrees at San Francisco. After a brief stay at San Francisco, he went to Portland. He then made a brief journey to Battle Ground and Mount Bell, the Skarstedts' early home in the 1880s. He was dismayed to observe the ravages that a great fire and the lumbering industry had made in the formerly beautiful virgin forest. He arrived at Seattle on July 30, after an absence of almost two months and 6,200 miles of train travel. Skarstedt, the perennial statistician, recorded that the railroad fare had cost \$107 or approximately 1 3/4 cents per mile. His expenditure for food, drink, and lodging was only \$20 over the two-month period. In reflecting upon this fact, he observed: "I have during the entire course of my life made mistakes in matters of finance and on the whole, I can be regarded as 'a human failure.' But I have one reason for which I can be thankful and it is that I have such a large number of friends."<sup>14</sup>

This was not a pleasant time for Ernst personally. He complained often of severe pains from lumbago and great difficulty in getting out of bed in the mornings. Moreover, there was great financial stress. He had no regular employment and the income from free-lance writing was small and irregular. His diary records several sales of books and music from his library in order to raise money for essential expenses. But Ernst had great resources in his friends. They

were generous in entertaining him with meals and drinks. Moreover, this fellowship was important in maintaining his spirit which had become increasingly pessimistic.<sup>15</sup>

An interesting example of the strong bonds of friendship which Ernst had fashioned occurred in July 1911, when business related to his book on Oregon brought him to Portland. Old friends planned a party to cheer Ernst's lagging spirits. After good food and drink, the hosts saluted their esteemed guest with speeches. Gustaf Holmquist recalled the day, in 1889, when he accompanied Ernst to visit the grave of Anna in the small cemetery at Vancouver. "Then," he said, "is when I learned to know the real Ernst Skarstedt." A. E. Schwartz reminisced about the occasion in San Francisco, when he stood outside the window of a room where Ernst was playing the violin, and his sensitive music blended with the murmuring of the two eucalyptus trees in creating a beautiful harmony. E. J. Grähs expressed gratitude for Ernst's unceasing labor, at the cost of financial loss, in recording the history of the Swedes in America. Torgny Zachrison described the boyhood of Ernst in Lund and the many escapades, including stealing pears from overloaded trees. J. E. Hellenius, who served as toastmaster, dramatized his feelings: "If my last hour were here and I was to be called from this world, but prior to that time if I were asked to select one name above all others that had made the greatest impression on me, it would be the name of Ernst Skarstedt." When the speeches were concluded, Ernst was raised on the shoulders of his friends and carried around the room. This joyous occasion came to an end at 2 A.M.<sup>16</sup>

As the months passed, Ernst began seriously to consider alternatives that might improve the economic status of the family. Real estate agencies were contacted with the objective of seeking a farm somewhere in Washington. In August 1911, he placed an advertisement in the *Seattle Times*, seeking offers for a place to live in the country. He continued to write articles for the Swedish American press, but he acknowledged that his ability to write was impaired by his anxiety about the future. He reflected on that future as he worked around the house at Columbia City. On August 11, he was at home all day, and part of the time was spent in sawing eight logs into firewood. This effort required 1,100 strokes of the saw.<sup>17</sup> Ernst needed some activity of that kind because criticism was getting



to him. He records in his diary that the wife of his good friend, Hugo Slettengren, was reported to have said that she was "astonished that I who had such talent in several areas could be so 'shiftless.'" Then Ernst commented: "Think what a sin it is that a man does not ruin his peace of mind by becoming a wealthy jackass. If no one attributes a worst failing in me than that I will be satisfied."<sup>18</sup>

In August 1911 Hugo Slettengren, Byström, and especially Tobias Sandegren, editor of the *Puget Sound Posten*, initiated an attempt to secure for Ernst the professorship in Scandinavian languages at the University of Washington. Ernst was not interested in the proposal. Sandegren persisted in his efforts and appealed in a letter to Ellen: "I am doing all I can to make Ernst a professor with \$2,500 a year. He is objecting. Make him come in line. If necessary, spank him good." Although it is not likely that Ernst would have been appointed, he settled the matter by writing to the *Puget Sound Posten* as follows: "When I read my name in connection with the Scandinavian professorship at the State University at Seattle it was with horrified amazement. . . . I can earnestly protest that I am completely unqualified. How could I possibly get along sitting in a professorial chair trying to look formal and respectable?"<sup>19</sup>

The months passed slowly since the prospects for the future did not seem encouraging. Ernst made many trips to farms in the Seattle area and in Puget Sound in search of a place to live. When the farm suited him, the cost was beyond his ability to purchase it. He made some money by selling some of his books and he continued to write articles for Swedish American newspapers. He took whatever opportunity that came to secure income. In February 1912, O. A. Clasell, an employee of the Court House in Seattle, engaged Ernst to copy the names and addresses of Swedes on the records at the City Hall in Seattle. He also addressed hundreds of envelopes for Clasell.<sup>20</sup>

In April 1912, after a search of several months, Ernst bought a farm near East Sound on Orcas Island in the archipelago of San Juan, a hundred miles from Seattle. Nash, the former owner, had asked \$2,500 for the farm and house, but he sold it to Ernst for \$1,700 with a down payment of \$200. Once again he sought the freedom that only the country life could provide. The Skarstedts lived there for slightly more than six years. The island was reached by boarding

the *Rosalie* at Seattle for an overnight trip. Their post office was East Sound, a small village.<sup>21</sup>

The Skarstedt farm was located four miles from East Sound and two miles from West Sound and between two mountains, the higher one rising to 2,400 feet. The northern part of Turtleback mountain raised its rugged and massive form near the Skarstedt house. The farm consisted of forty acres with five acres under cultivation. The house had four rooms, a kitchen, and a veranda. The windows gave a clear view to the south and west. One visitor reported that "Rosebuds and honeysuckle are resplendent outside the veranda and as a sort of shield for home and homelife feeling are the crowns of thickly foliated cherry and apple trees that murmur above the cottage roof." When G. N. Malm, the Kansas Swedish American artist and author, visited his friend Ernst in 1915, he compared the charm and beauty of the archipelago with the landscape of Vättern in Sweden with its Visingsö, concluding that the two areas were the most beautiful places in the world.<sup>22</sup>

The Skarstedts shared actively in the life of the small community. Mellie and Martha were in school so Ellen was especially active in supporting school activities. When Ernst went to vote in the general election of 1912, he voted a split ticket. There is nothing in his diary or in other sources to indicate that the critical battle for votes between Taft, Roosevelt, and Wilson aroused any special interest for him. Ellen and Ernst visited often with the Kings, the Nobles, and the Howards. There were Grange meetings and meetings of the Farmer's Institute to attend. Moreover, Ernst continued his pleasant custom of playing duets and brought his talent to the orchestra at the village dances.<sup>23</sup>

There was some variety in the daily life of Ernst on his farm. His diary describes additional activities:

June 18. 64°. Little rain this morning. Got up at 5:30, greased the wagon, fed the horse, brought in the cows, loaded the hogs assisted by Ellen and Mellie, ate a little and drove out at 6:30 to East Sound with 4 lbs. of butter. Got the wagon wheel repaired and drove home before 10. Hoed the garden in the P.M. In the evening Ellen and I went to Allison's and Hardison's and stayed there a long time and talked. Chopped 700 pieces of kindling.

Ernst was especially uneasy during the first year on this new farm. In early August 1912 he wrote in his diary: "I do not feel

secure. . . . Why did I come here? Why have I thrown away my money again and got myself into a place of struggle and frustration where no return can be expected?" Undoubtedly one factor was financial. Ernst had great difficulty in selling his Columbia City property, so his economic situation was rather acute. He was fifty-five when he moved to Orcas Island. He realized that the experience of his family had been generally fraught with uncertainty and considerable hardship. Moreover, he was restless by nature and a true vagabond. The future often seemed uncertain to him during this period. However, when he made a trip to Seattle, a fairly frequent occurrence, his spirits rose. There he visited with old friends as they enjoyed drinks, and fine fellowship. He spent long but fleeting hours in the Seattle public library. On occasion, he went to Adelphi College in Seattle where he spent many hours with the books of his father's library that the college had purchased through the efforts of President Emanuel Schmidt.<sup>24</sup>

The place of greatest interest in the Skarstedt home on Orcas Island was the room where Ernst read, played the violin and piano, wrote books and articles, entertained infrequent visitors, reflected on the past, and dreamed about the future. The floor had a thread-bare carpet and the ceilings and walls had been covered with plain grayish paper. The furnishings consisted of a piano, a writing desk, a bookcase, and a few chairs. The walls attracted the greatest interest:

But such walls [exclaimed one visitor]. From floor to ceiling books, newspaper clippings, magazines, oil paintings, water colors, etchings, lithographs, engravings, woodcuts, and photographs. There is not likely any room in another farm in Christendom that can be compared to this room. Skarstedt associates there with Excellencies, not those whom one approaches with awe, but those with whom one associates intimately, the Excellencies of the spirit. At times Skarstedt feels himself filled up with this genius society, and longs greatly for ordinary people.<sup>25</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's library consisted of hundreds of volumes in Swedish, English, French, German, Greek, and Latin. The classics of the world's literature were found on the shelves of this room. Special emphasis was given to biography and travel accounts. Esaias Tegnér was Ernst's favorite. Mark Twain and Jules Verne were read with enthusiasm. Skarstedt enjoyed the change of pace in reading the works of Elbert Hubbard, who visited the farm home on Orcas

Island. The original oil paintings, water colors, and prints were primarily the works of Swedish American artists, especially Birger Sandzén, Olof Grafström, and G. N. Malm, and one by Anders Zorn, the famous Swedish artist. The large number of photographs were reminders of old friends and persons whom he admired, together with reproductions of historic buildings and events.

The literary likes and dislikes of Ernst Skarstedt were strongly marked. Selma Lagerlöf, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1909 and elected a member of the Swedish Academy in 1914, was not among the authors liked and appreciated by him. In 1911, at a time when Selma Lagerlöf was exceedingly popular, Ernst wrote to Vilhelm Reslow: "I do not wish to have Selma Lagerlöf's books. I cannot endure her style of writing, and it is a wonder to me how anyone reads through her books, and in addition, considers them interesting, as you do." He described her books as "totally unpalatable, uninteresting, tedious, muddled, unpleasant, childish, and labored." He would "want to be paid well to read any of her books." He recounted that he had tried to read *Gösta Berlings saga*, but he had tired before he had read twenty pages. *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa*, an unusual account of a boy's view of Sweden, seemed so "idiotic" that he could do nothing more than glance at three or four sections. Ernst had only limited interest in August Strindberg. He enjoyed *Röda rummet* (The Red Room); he had considerable appreciation for *Hemsöborna* (The People of Hemso) and *Svenska folket i helg och söcken*. He had no interest in Strindberg's other works.<sup>26</sup>

The most interesting single article in Ernst Skarstedt's room was an old trunk. This was a special item, almost sacred among his belongings. This trunk had been the depository for many years of his diaries, journals, letters, memoranda, and other personal documents. Although most of his books, clippings, photographs, and memorabilia had been destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906, this precious chest had been saved. This act involved a special effort as Ernst and Ellen at considerable personal risk pulled the trunk from the building.<sup>27</sup>

Fortunately, visitors have described the response of Ernst Skarstedt to life on Orcas Island. When "J. E. H." a writer for *Svenska Pressen*, Tacoma and Seattle, visited the farmer-author in the

summer of 1913, he recorded his impressions. Ernst brought out a bundle of books and documents, describing to his visitor their contents. Two volumes labeled *Variana*, which the host had assembled continuously since 1876, when he was nineteen years old, were of great interest. These manuscript volumes were essentially collections of poetry, together with some prose selections that Ernst had copied because of their great value as reading references. "J. E. H." and Ernst read selections to one another. The situation has been described by Ernst's guest:

One doesn't need to say who one is if one shows the kind of books one prefers. I found myself surrounded by the rarest collection of literary items, scientific treatises, personal and intimate studies that can be found anywhere. A child's happy enthusiasm, a world citizen's sound judgment, a thinker's reflections, and an art lover's admiration show clearly between the pages and in the notes. It was necessary to be quiet. I am sure that we did not begrudge each other the quiet. . . . There was inner and outer peace in the world. It was one of those high points in life when one becomes a child again, when all selfish dissatisfactions give place to joy that cannot be explained.<sup>28</sup>

The natural light of the sun by day and the flickering light of a kerosene lamp at night enabled Ernst Skarstedt to spend long hours in his room reading, reflecting, and writing. An inventory of his literary and journalistic productivity shows remarkable achievement during the six years on Orcas Island. The total number of articles published in newspapers and periodicals before the trip to Sweden in 1916 was almost 300 during this period. These articles appeared primarily in Swedish and Swedish-American journals and occasionally in American agricultural publications. It was during this period that Ernst wrote one of his best known books. He recorded in his diary in June 1913, that he had started work on the manuscript. Six months later, on December 16, the entry in the diary was as follows: "45°. Ellen drove to West Sound with 6 lbs. of butter. Scheib (the thresher) was here and bought 70 sacks from me. I went there in the P.M. with Mamie (the cow). Had a terrible time to find the bull which was terribly sleepy and listless. Completed the book (*Vagabond och redaktör*) with a couple of glasses of port wine. Dinner. Chicken and cherries. Went to bed at 2:30 A.M. Howard plowed." *Vagabond och redaktör* (Vagabond and Editor), 410 pages, was

published in the United States in 1914. This is a fascinating and detailed autobiographical narrative of Skarstedt's first ten years in America.<sup>29</sup>

The hundreds of manuscripts which Ernst Skarstedt sent to editors from his farm house covered a wide variety of subjects. There were articles about Charles Darwin, August Strindberg, Elbert Hubbard, Abraham Lincoln (a series of twelve articles), Billy Sunday, and Woodrow Wilson. Editors received manuscripts on socialism, nationalism, patriotism, Catholicism, education, vivisection, vaccination, prohibition, platonic love, patent medicine, medical fads, immigration, cost of living, elections, monetary reform, and anti-trust laws. The cause and course of World War I, world peace, American relations with Germany and Britain, and the sinking of the *Lusitania* were included in the range of subjects. Skarstedt wrote about evolution, life in nature, the soul life of animals, the nature of genius, weaknesses in Christianity, melancholy, pessimism, and life in the country and city. There were many historical and cultural articles on Sweden and Swedish America. Although there was considerable variation in the quality of the articles, a high standard generally prevailed.<sup>30</sup>

The editorials and articles of Ernst Skarstedt, as indicated above, dealt with general topics that often engaged his attention during his entire journalistic career, but he was also interested in specific issues and situations. When he contemplated the future of the human race, he recorded a pattern that was rather pessimistic. In June 1906, in an article, "Our Race's Final Destiny," he saw only slight hope. After studying the literature on the subject, he observed, "If we can believe contemporary scientists and scholars, we have reason to ask the question: Will our world survive? Modern research seems to conclude that we are condemned finally to eclipse and the time will come when life will not be found on earth. . . . Individuals and nations are born and die; civilizations reach their high point and fall." The source of this pessimistic conclusion came from contemporary projections: The supply of oxygen is diminishing and the time will come when it will be exhausted; the sources of water will be consumed through evaporation and use, and the earth will become a parched, uninhabitable wilderness; the sun is gradually losing its energy and, in time, will become a dead, cold body, thus eliminating

the possibility of organic life. In the context of these allegations, the author asked: "Is man's life on earth only a passing episode, an occurrence without cause or purpose, so that all striving is in vain and all our efforts wasted?" In the midst of the evidence and the despair which it generated, Skarstedt found some signs of hope: "If the creation is grounded on certain principles like goodness and love, all in time will have a fine end regardless of how dark it seems presently to our sight and understanding. . . . Moreover each generation repudiates or modifies the previous generations's scientific teachings."<sup>31</sup>

In February 1907 Skarstedt recorded his response to the study of the literature of social prophecy from George Bellamy to H. G. Wells. He was impressed and awed by the prospects: Cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago with populations of forty millions; buildings of 150 stories with entire sides of glass; electrical machines that make ice and bring sound and pictures into homes; new sources of energy from the air and sun; widespread air travel; moving sidewalks; and well-balanced diets provided by pills. These technological changes were to be accompanied in some strange but unidentified manner with great intellectual gains and a new morality of love and brotherhood. But it all seemed so unreal to Ernst Skarstedt, who observed: "As far as I am concerned, I consider myself fortunate that I will be out of the way when all these changes in man's way of living come about."<sup>32</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt, like all thoughtful persons, was concerned about the big questions in life. He was interested in Huxley's view that life is like a chessboard whose pieces are the phenomena in the world and the laws of nature are the rules of the game. Skarstedt shared the view that "we are the players on one side of the chessboard, and the player on the other side is hidden from our view, but we know that he is just, patient, and tolerant. The individual who moves his pieces with insight and due calculation, receives a rich return; one who plays badly, loses, and has an inevitable checkmate sooner or later." When he contemplated the response of the individual to the problems of life, he affirmed that the only true guide was science. Moreover, science should not be considered dry and prosaic. Nature, too, provides meaning: "Nature and its many-sided phenomena are full of poetry, inspiration, and joy for

him who looks at them with an open mind and the desire to know." The individual should also study himself, his talents and deficiencies, his opportunities, and his environment, and then return to the study of the laws of nature. He will find a new harmony with the rest of creation. He will wisely move the pieces on the chessboard of life.<sup>33</sup>

As an acute observer of American life, Ernst Skarstedt was distressed by the great wastefulness and utter disregard for the conservation of natural resources. In an article, "America's National Sin," in February 1907, he wrote: "They ravage and surge forward as if they have bottomless ditches to scoop from. Countless riches in the form of forests, fisheries, hunting grounds, mineral deposits, and oil and gas wells have been treated with senseless extravagance to which truly no country in the world can show any comparison." He lamented the absence of laws which would have parceled out the land for rational use and protected the forests and other natural resources from devastation by thoughtless and greedy men. Americans had betrayed their natural heritage by abusing the irreplaceable riches of nature and they had imperiled the future by denying to unborn generations the resources which should have been preserved. Skarstedt concluded that this wastefulness could best be described as "America's National Sin."<sup>34</sup>

When World War I broke out in July-August 1914, Ernst Skarstedt was appalled at the condition of man that allowed such a tragedy to occur. The rulers and government leaders were responsible primarily for throwing the spark into the powder barrel, but, "the fact that millions of people responded to their orders and acted like blind instruments in their hands, is proof enough of the claim that mankind as a whole, in spite of a polished exterior, is little more than a wild animal." All talk about peace conferences, peace palaces, arbitration, and conciliation became "simple humbug, a ludicrous joke, pure nonsense." Only a few people had attained the truly human position, for whom the thought of war and bloodletting is so terrible that nothing will force them to participate in it. They may be able to persuade a few others, but will they succeed? Skarstedt argued that, "the witness of history answers with a point blank, 'No.' Neither protest nor rational argument have any effect upon the servants of the god of war. Only one thing can bring them to reason and peace and that is the discovery of such a terrible devastating



instrument of death that war will become impossible." Ernst went on to say he had previously thought that upbringing and education would make men peace-loving and produce permanent peace. He now was certain that, "salvation must come through pure mechanical means and some frightfully clever inventor of monstrous death weapons will be the savior."<sup>35</sup>

The distress of Ernst Skarstedt with the emotional response of false patriotism at the outbreak of World War I was apparent from his newspaper articles. He lamented the chauvinistic outburst in literary and historical writings which he felt "bear witness to contemptible patriotism." This pattern was almost universal in Europe and the United States. When he considered the political situation, in which individuals and groups in the United States were violently accusing each other of lack of loyalty, he concluded, "If this is patriotism and the fruits of patriotism, so may a merciful Providence keep me from ever being patriotic." When he contemplated the shallowness of some patriotic expressions, he could only affirm: "Away with this contemptible kind of patriotism. It is much better to be a cosmopolitan and be able to say with Thomas Paine: 'The whole world is my country.'"<sup>36</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt was a consistent opponent of socialism and state intervention in economic affairs. In March 1907 he attacked the labor-source-of-value theory as unrealistic. He observed that even a little reflection shows that capital is just as necessary as labor; without capital no large factories could be constructed, and without extensive facilities, no employment and income would be possible for the largest part of the current population. He strongly maintained: "It is a basically false idea that conditions would be better if wealth were confiscated and if the State took over all possible factories. The experiences in this respect have not been encouraging. . . . In any event, the point remains. . . . that the less the government becomes involved in practical affairs, the better it is for the people. As soon as politics becomes involved in affairs, it is infected with 'graft' and cheating; and politics always becomes an inevitable ingredient of all governmental enterprises."<sup>37</sup>

Skarstedt was often involved in controversy with socialists. When he accepted the invitation of *Svenska Socialisten*, the major socialist newspaper in Swedish America, to present his arguments

against socialism, he condemned it as consisting of "wild concepts and fantasies" and as being "violative of freedom and individualism." G. V. Dahlmer who answered Skarstedt, argued: "It is easy to understand how he cannot comprehend the reasons why the theories of socialism are called scientific; he has not gone deep enough in order to grasp their scientific meaning." Although Dahlmer appreciated Skarstedt's republican and democratic feeling, he contended that, "Skarstedt has failed to take into account the fact that in order to achieve the possibility of real government by the people, it is necessary for the people not only to have political democracy but they must also have industrial democracy."<sup>38</sup>

The staunch economic individualism of Ernst Skarstedt caused him to condemn prosecution of American corporations under the Sherman anti-trust legislation. In an article in October 1914, he referred, critically, to legal action against Eastman Kodak, National Cash Register, and International Harvester corporations by observing, "It is hard to understand how the reputation of the United States for justice and the common welfare is promoted by the government's war against large business firms." In seeking to refute the government's charges of monopoly and price fixing against the corporations, Ernst countered by pointing out that the employees were well paid, that thousands of new jobs had been created, and that the witness of the consumers was highly commendatory. He cited the testimony in court of farmers that the products of International Harvester were excellent and that the prices had not been increased, although the implements had been substantially improved. He saw no reason for opposing the merging of corporations since no evils had resulted. He concluded by observing that, "legal action against men to whom the nation owes thanks for the high position that has been attained in wealth and progress, brings no honor to either the nation or the government."<sup>39</sup>

The famous case in 1915 of Joe Hill [Joseph Hillström], a Swedish immigrant, brought a decisive response from Skarstedt. Hill was a well-known leader in the IWW and an able and controversial agitator for economic and social change. His colorful career came to an end when he was found guilty of murder during an alleged robbery in Salt Lake City and then executed by a Utah firing squad in November 1915, preceded by appeals for clemency from President

Woodrow Wilson; Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor; and the Swedish Minister to the United States, W. A. F. Ekengren.<sup>40</sup>

The Swedish American press generally was far more favorable to Joe Hill than was Ernst Skarstedt. A few days after Hill's execution, Skarstedt sent a letter to the *Utah Posten*, congratulating the editor for his support of the conviction and execution of Hill. In the letter, Skarstedt lamented, "the sickening, insipid, and idiotic resolutions that had appeared in some sections of the press in behalf of this loathsome villain." He regretted that whenever "a rotten egg" among Swedes was caught in the clutches of the law, Swedish Americans came to his defense. Skarstedt's intense feeling on the subject is apparent when he wrote, "to present enemies of society, scoundrels, robbers, and murderers as heroes and persecuted innocent men when they by chance sometimes receive their well-deserved compensation, is despicable and terrible, and that the Swedes should characterize themselves in such a manner is so annoying that one almost wishes that one was not a Swede."<sup>41</sup>

The year 1915 witnessed repeated attacks on patent medicines by Ernst. He lamented the advertisements for the cure of illnesses like tuberculosis, cancer, and diabetes. He found it "unbelievable how people allowed themselves to be duped by such promises." His severe criticism was directed against testimonials in advertisements by those who allegedly had been cured by the product. Ernst's criticism of patent medicines in 1915 was completely inconsistent with his own endorsement of Dr. P. Håkanson's Salubrin six years earlier. In a letter in October 1909, to Dr. Josua Lindahl, his old friend, who was then manager of the Salubrin Laboratories, Chicago, he highly praised this product. As evidence he cited that Salubrin had recently prevented infection and stimulated healing in an inch-and-a-half cut in his thumb. The previous spring, Mellie had come home from school with a sore throat and such hoarseness that she could scarcely speak, but after using Salubrin the pain disappeared in an hour, and in a few days she was completely cured. Moreover, when Mr. Larson, former police chief in Nome, Alaska, used Salubrin upon Ernst's recommendation to cure tonsillitis, for which a physician had recommended surgery, Larson reported that he was cured by the patent medicine in two days. The endorsement in Ernst's letter to

Lindahl appeared in a full page advertisement in his volumes, *California och dess svenska befolkning* (1910) and *Oregon och dess svenska befolkning* (1911).<sup>42</sup>

The restless nature of Ernst Skarstedt and the desire to visit with intimate friends provided occasions for extensive travel. He made nineteen trips to Seattle during these years and on four occasions he continued his journey to Portland, and once he went to San Francisco and Oakland. He lived in San Francisco between May 4 and July 8, 1916, when he worked on *Vestkusten*, the Swedish newspaper. This was an exhilarating time when he shared much conviviality with old friends. Ernst's unfailing record-keeping indicates that he was a frequent guest in the homes of friends, sharing meals with the following families: Fehlers, twenty-four; Olssons, ten; Högborgs, four; and one to two meals with sixteen other families. Ernst's friends apparently were anxious to have his company, because his diary states that his income of \$172.70 in contrast with expenditures of \$128.65 for room, meals, and books, came from a salary of \$100.00 at *Vestkusten*, a \$25.00 gift from Westerlund, \$5.00 each from eight other persons, and smaller amounts from still other individuals. The visits to these cities provided many opportunities to attend the cinema, concerts, and lectures, and to spend much time in the library. When he was in San Francisco during the great exhibition of 1915, he heard three concerts by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Karl Munch conducting, and to his great delight he attended excellent performances of Beethoven's and Haydn's symphonies.<sup>43</sup>

Late in February 1916 the normal quiet of Ernst Skarstedt's life on Orcas Island was pleasantly disturbed when a message came to him from New York inviting him to join a party of Swedish American journalists the next month for a visit to Sweden. The situation is described in Ernst's diary, February 25, 1916: "42°. Windy. Telephone message from Kings that at East Sound there was a telegram for me from *Nordstjernan*. We drove to East Sound. Telegram. 'Will you sail Stockholm as *Nordstjernan* representative if accepted. Will telegraph money. Telegram prepared. Charles K. Johansen.' After intensive reflection I answered: 'Accept offer. Would like to get particulars if time permits.' Chopped 500 pieces of kindling." He was pleased as he read the request from Johansen,

publisher of *Nordstjernan*, inviting him to represent this influential New York Swedish newspaper on a goodwill mission sponsored by the newly-founded Swedish American Line as the *S. S. Stockholm* made its eastbound maiden voyage from New York to Göteborg. The steamship company and the newspaper would provide the expenses for the trip. Small wonder that the veteran Swedish American journalist accepted the invitation with enthusiasm.

## XI

# SWEDEN REVISITED

When Ernst Skarstedt and nine other representatives of Swedish American newspapers boarded the new and attractive *S. S. Stockholm* in New York on March 15, 1916, it was amidst a swirling snowstorm, tempered somewhat by a Swedish Male Chorus singing about the homeland. Following appropriate festivities amidst "hurrahs" from dockside, Ernst saw the dim outline of the New York sky line disappear as the *S. S. Stockholm* glided into the Hudson River and beyond. The first-class accommodations that Skarstedt occupied were quite unlike the steerage space when in 1885 he boarded the *S. S. Germanic* on a strange and futile mission to the homeland.<sup>1</sup>

Life on the *S. S. Stockholm* was pleasant and uneventful at the outset. Passengers were invited to share the rather rigorous Swedish physical training program in the mornings before breakfast, but Ernst was never there. Groups were formed to play poker but the *Nordstjernan* representative was otherwise employed in the smoking room where he found many interesting books, his favorites being Gerstäcker's romantic travel volumes. Although Ernst was not a winner of any of the pools offered to the person guessing each day's mileage, he mentions that his friend Gunnar Wickman, *Vestkusten* representative, was the winner of the 50-kronor prize on four occasions. But Ernst enjoyed the crossing and was a familiar figure at the attractive bar when small groups shared experiences or reflected on what it would be like in Sweden. Thirty years had

passed since Ernst had seen the land of his birth.<sup>2</sup>

The passengers on the *S. S. Stockholm* on the March 1916 voyage were soon reminded en route that they lived in a world at war. There were frequent life-boat drills, and they were instructed to have their life belts close at hand at all times. The weather and sea conditions were excellent as the new, proud boat, the largest and finest in Scandinavian American travel, moved steadily on toward Göteborg. However, on March 24, the natural quietness of that part of the universe was disrupted sharply when a shot was heard. When the passengers rushed on deck, they saw a British cruiser, the *H. M. Pembroke*, signaling to the *S. S. Stockholm*. The signal conveyed the terse message: "Stop immediately." The pistons on the *S. S. Stockholm* soon slowed down and came to a complete quiet 400 miles from the British coast. Soon three English officers and six marines boarded the Swedish ship.<sup>3</sup>

Captain A. Håkanson and the crew of the Swedish *S. S. Stockholm* were instructed to follow the orders which would bring their ship under the guard of the *H. M. Pembroke* to Kirkwall on the northeast coast of the Orkneys. The *S. S. Stockholm* arrived near Kirkwall on Friday evening, and on Saturday it was piloted carefully through the mine field to the dock. There British officials made a thorough search of passengers, documents, and cargo. The cargo was examined carefully for contraband of war. Ernst and his associates were impressed both with the thoroughness of the search and the courtesy of the officials. The Swedish American journalists had no special problems except Professor A. A. Stomberg, representing *Minnesota Stats-Tidning*, whose German-sounding name aroused momentary suspicion. Moreover, the officials were somewhat puzzled by the large number of notes that Stomberg had assembled as part of his proposed research in Sweden. There were also many questions about a document in his possession prepared by Lars P. Nelson, one of the journalists, proposing that the Kings of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden call a peace conference in Washington, D. C.<sup>4</sup>

When the search and questions had been concluded, the signal was given on Monday, four days after arriving in Kirkwall, that the *S. S. Stockholm* could proceed to Göteborg. Only one member of the crew, a German national, was detained and the rest of the crew and passengers as well as the cargo were cleared for travel. The delayed

voyage came to an end in fog-enclosed Göteborg on March 31. This vagary of nature kept the passengers from experiencing the feeling of nostalgia that immigrants usually shared on first sight of the homeland after many years of absence.<sup>5</sup>

In order to expedite the travel plans of the journalists from America, a small boat, the *Ejdern* came alongside the *S. S. Stockholm* to bring them to the dock. They were greeted with lusty "hurrahs" as they set foot upon Swedish soil. Even the most reserved felt a surging tide of emotion at the end of the voyage. Ernst Skarstedt was described as being animated and enthusiastic as he exchanged greetings with Swedish reporters and members of the host delegation. Gunnar Wickman has portrayed one scene of special interest: "A slender man, with a fur coat and glasses, went directly to Ernst, shook his hand heartily, and began to talk with him. Skarstedt was astounded at how well the stranger knew him and his family and only after twenty minutes of conversation did he finally realize that the man he was talking to was his own brother. Then they embraced. They had not seen each other for thirty years." Waldemar, now editor of the *Falu-Kuriren*, and Ernst, were in their thirties when they had last met. Three decades had made some profound changes.<sup>6</sup>

The American visitors were housed in the Grand Hotel in Göteborg. Interesting and varied entertainment was arranged for them. They visited the Göteborg museum, *Göteborgs högskola* and *Masthuggskyrkan*, the well-known Göteborg landmark. The young students at the school sang Runeberg's beautiful, *Vårt Land* (Our Land) and at the church there was a great quiet as K. Ericson sang Stenhammar's gripping song, *Sverige*. A festive dinner was arranged when the visitors were guests of *Riksföreningen för svenskhetens bevarande i utlandet* (Society for the Preservation of Swedish Culture Abroad). On one occasion, Axel Engdahl, famous comic, provided the entertainment so successfully that one guest noticed that Skarstedt laughed so hard that he almost fell off the chair. There were sight-seeing tours and other festivities during the brief stay in Göteborg. Ernst also met a daughter of Anna's brother Gottfrid, Anna's sister Sofia, and Captain Abraham Dahlström, who had been an officer on the *William* during the voyage to the White Sea in 1875.<sup>7</sup>

When the main party went in a private railroad coach from



Göteborg to Stockholm Ernst Skarstedt hurried to Falun to visit briefly with brother Waldemar before joining the group in the Swedish capital where they stayed in *Hotel Kronprinsen*. The Americans again enjoyed the generous largesse of Swedish hospitality. Ernst shared in the festivities at *Nordiska museet* and *Skansen* and in a gala dinner when the host was Cabinet Minister Daniel Broström. April 4 was the greatest day for the journalists because an audience with King Gustaf V had been arranged. The event, scheduled for 10 A.M., required formal dress. Ernst Skarstedt, in keeping with his principles, refused to dress in a frock coat and striped trousers although his associates had urged him to do so. A. A. Stomberg, a member of the group, has described the situation:

Elegant carriages came at the appointed time to get us at the hotel. Naturally a large crowd had assembled, drawn as I always suspected, by curiosity about Skarstedt and how he would meet the situation, for by this time all Stockholm knew him well from cartoons, interviews, and sketches. Skarstedt had in fact put on a clean soft-collared shirt that morning but his hat was just as dilapidated as before, and his trousers just as baggy. Naturally the rest of the party, nine in all, were just a little worried how His Majesty would like this breach of etiquette by one of our party.<sup>8</sup>

When the carriages reached the Royal Palace, the nine men in frock coats and striped trousers and nonconformist Ernst Skarstedt were met by the King's adjutant, Colonel Silfverswärd, who presented them to the King's Chamberlain, Viscount Beck-Friis, whose gold-spangled uniform was distinguished by many stars and decorations. The American visitors were then brought to the King's hunt room, where an observer was attracted by the great interest that Skarstedt showed in the mounted deer and elk trophies. When the doors swung open at exactly 10 A.M., King Gustaf V appeared in a general's uniform with the order of the seraphim on his breast. What happened then is recorded by a participant in this gala occasion:

Presently we were asked into the King's reception room and here we noticed that His Majesty gave Skarstedt an especially hearty greeting. After we had all been duly introduced, the King turned again to Skarstedt saying that he knew his father well, and was quite familiar with Skarstedt's literary activities in America. At least half the time we were with the King he spent with Skarstedt, who did not seem a bit flustered even though his garb was unconventional. . . . Every-

body knew of course, that Skarstedt meant no disrespect; he only stuck firmly to a life-long principle.<sup>9</sup>

King Gustaf V spoke briefly to the Americans. He wished to send through the journalists his greetings to Swedish Americans in the distant West, indicating also his great interest in his countrymen and their life there. Finally, the King said: "Now that we have a trans-Atlantic ship line between Sweden and America you should come often and visit us. I would prefer that you stay here, because we need you here at home and I can assure you that the government would do everything for your comfort here." The Americans left the Royal Palace with a deep respect for the King and his attitude.<sup>10</sup>

Two other events stood out for Ernst Skarstedt and his friends during the days in Stockholm. Following the audience with the King, the journalists were guests for lunch in the home of the United States Minister and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Ira Nelson Morris. There was some puzzlement among these Americanized Swedish immigrants as they entered Prince Vilhelm's beautiful palace, Oakhill, in Djurgården, which the Ambassador had rented from the Prince. This was a fabulously beautiful place, but the visiting Americans were also impressed by the kindly democratic nature of the ambassador. Another interesting event, following a luncheon tendered by the city of Stockholm, had a rather bizarre ending. When the festivities of the luncheon were over, Lieutenant Folcker of the city fire department read aloud an article from the *New York Herald* which claimed that the Stockholm fire department was so bureaucratically and inefficiently managed that there were great delays before all the arrangements could be made in dispatching fire trucks. Ernst Skarstedt was asked by Lieutenant Folcker to smash the glass on an emergency fire alarm. He hesitated, but finally, in the midst of photographers, he accomplished the act which sounded the alarm. This unrehearsed and unscheduled act brought the first fire-fighting equipment to the scene in less than two minutes. Twenty-nine fire departmental vehicles arrived shortly thereafter. A great crowd of people assembled as the ladders were raised to fight a fire that did not exist. But the Swedish city officials succeeded in disproving the claims of the *New York Herald* about bureaucratic inefficiency while at the same time convincing the American visitors of the high quality of Stockholm's firemen's corps. Ernst also visited with Axel Högborg,

Ellen's brother, who had been an invalid for many years.<sup>11</sup>

Ernst was in Lund on April 20 to attend the funeral of his stepmother, who had died in Stockholm on April 14. He had visited her on her sickbed a week earlier. Conrad, Sigfrid, and Waldemar, his brothers, and other male mourners wore stovepipe hats and black crepe arm bands. Ernst borrowed an ordinary black hat which he wore at the service together with the crepe arm band on his coat, a symbol of mourning. The funeral party went to the home of the minister following the service, where Sigfrid and Conrad rendered tributes to the deceased Mrs. C. W. Skarstedt. Ernst was a guest of Axel Hall, his old friend from school days. While in Lund, Axel and Ernst visited familiar places—the botanical garden, the University, and the Cathedral. Conrad, Waldemar, and he visited their old home on Bytaregatan. He also spent some time in the University library where he “glanced at the 250,000 volumes.” Ernst's stay in Lund came to an end after two weeks.<sup>12</sup>

The Swedish American journalists returned to America on the *S. S. Stockholm* in April except for Professor Stomberg and Ernst Skarstedt. Ernst stayed on and traveled far and wide for the last time in old Sweden. He joined Waldemar, his brother, and O. A. Assar for an extensive tour that brought them as far north as Narvik in Norway and to Kiruna, Piteå, and other distant Swedish areas in the land of the midnight sun. Ernst responded joyfully to the beauties of the Swedish countryside in the spring, whether it was in Dalarna, on Midsummer Day, with its rich folklore traditions, or Skåne, in the South, where he visited in Lund, his boyhood home. He was followed with great interest wherever he went. *Göteborgs Handelstidning* and *Dagens Nyheter*, Stockholm, in the two largest cities wrote long articles about “the American Tolstoy” as he was called and *Smålandsposten*, Växjö, and the *Hjo Tidning*, at Hjo, representative of the provincial press, featured this unique son of the late Professor C. W. Skarstedt.<sup>13</sup>

When *Nya Wermlands-Tidningen*, Karlstad, learned about the proposed visit of the Swedish American journalists the editor wrote: “The Nestor among the Swedish American newspaper men, Ernst Skarstedt, should be forced to participate if he does not do so by persuasion.” He was well-known in Sweden through his books and articles. Great interest was stimulated in this son of the distinguished

Skarstedt-Wieselgren family who turned his back upon a literary or academic career for the life of a vagabond and editor, as he called himself. Many photographs, cartoons, and caricatures appeared in the Swedish newspapers. There was never derision but always appreciation for a unique personality who was recognized for his great contribution in making known the experiences of more than a million Swedish immigrants and their descendents in "the great land in the West," as the United States was known.<sup>14</sup>

When the reporters interviewed him they became more interested in his personality than in what he said. There are many descriptions of his long hair and flowing beard, his quizzical look, his slouch hat, and his baggy trousers. But they wrote about one who knew the virtues of solitude and the abiding resources of nature. Perhaps he symbolized a freedom that was coming to birth rapidly in the country which had been depressed by class distinctions, that had placed heavy burdens to be borne by the lower classes. An unknown reporter for *Smålandsposten*, after following Ernst Skarstedt one day in Växjö, wrote: "The one who writes these lines had the pleasure of following Ernst Skarstedt during his wanderings in our town and could not avoid receiving a deep impression of his rich, warm, completely original, honest, guileless, and free personality and be inspired by his open and sensitive spirit."<sup>15</sup>

Five months had passed rapidly in Sweden. He must turn his thoughts again to America, his family, and his home. On August 5, 1916, he boarded the *S. S. Stockholm* for the westbound passage. He saw the gray rocks at Göteborg and the Swedish coastline for the last time.

Skarstedt wrote extensively in *Nordstjernan* and other newspapers about his impressions gained during this stay in Sweden. His frankness produced many criticisms although he also found reasons for praise. He was especially critical of the "clearing of the throat and spitting around one so often. In first class as well as in third class railroad carriages, the spittoons are used enthusiastically. The passengers, thronged together, spit over each other's legs. It felt like coming into the antechambers of heaven when I returned to America and sat for the first time in a railroad coach." He pointed out that Director Löwegren of Göteborg's famous *Trädgårdsföreningen* (horticulture park) warned mothers not to permit their children to play in the

sand because so much spitting had polluted the area.<sup>16</sup>

The Swedish railways received sharp criticism from Ernst Skarstedt. Instead of the comfort of American railway coaches, he found the "impractical arrangements in the Swedish coaches where passengers are driven into small compartments and forced to sit face to face with unruly, strange people, and if one cannot get a place by the window, there is no rest." The passengers in third class sat on hard and narrow wooden benches with no arm rests. Half of them must sit backwards to the movement of the train. It was impossible to read or move. The atmosphere was also distressing: "If you speak to someone, you are greeted with a look that expresses both shock and insult. It is looked upon as inappropriate to speak to a person to whom you have not been introduced." Ernst had sat for hours on a train where not a word was spoken, the people only sitting and staring at each other. He had traveled 10,350 kilometers or 6,417 miles in Sweden, but he had never become acquainted with a single person. When he had attempted on three or four occasions to ask a question, only once was the fellow passenger willing to answer. When he returned to America, the situation was entirely different. In five minutes, he had a fine visit with a man from Montana who owned a farm. Skarstedt soon learned how much the man had paid for the farm.<sup>17</sup>

There were several general criticisms of arrangements in Sweden. The telephone system was cumbersome and inefficient, a pattern complicated by what he considered the irksome listing of names with titles, when the use of initials seemed to be more practical. But this was not surprising as he observed: "It struck me on many occasions in Sweden as if they with special enthusiasm went out of the way to make everything as impractical as possible." He found that eating in a Swedish restaurant was a tiresome, ceremonious experience with complicated menus, tediousness in placing an order and being served, the eternal *noblesse oblige*, and tipping.<sup>18</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt felt strongly that women in Sweden had a position inferior to that of their counterparts in America. He wrote: "A scene which pained me greatly was to see again and again women, who often were old women, lying on their knees by a sea or stream, washing clothes by pounding them against the rocks. When I objected I was told: 'These women are not used to anything else.' "

He was distressed also to learn that, "Both in Stockholm and Göteborg women are afraid to go out alone at night." However, he was favorably impressed by the praiseworthy modesty of Swedish women.<sup>19</sup>

The Swedish American critic was disturbed by the attitude of many people: "The Swedish characteristics of impracticality, changeableness, and lack of conviction combined with skepticism causes the Swedes to view everything new with distrust and to regard everything as a falsehood which one has not himself experienced. These factors and others combine to produce the situation with the result that I at least do not wish to die in the North." He acknowledged that class consciousness and distinctions were less marked than thirty years ago, but much remained to be done. He found objections to the fact that a gentleman may not carry his own bag. When he tried to do so, he was told: "Let my son carry your bags, it looks bad if you yourself carry them." He was impressed by the fact that, "No one wishes to change. There is still the old Swedish cowardice—fear of what people will say." He was annoyed by the fact that conversation was conducted in the third person with the inevitable titles. He cited an example: "How did the engineer feel yesterday?" The reply was: "Well, thank you, I was quite well, but how did the director feel?" He was certain that, "When people are introduced it is more important to get the title correct than the name."<sup>20</sup>

Ernst also had praise for Sweden and the Swedes. He wrote: "I liked that Swedish men had beards and did not copy the American custom of trying to look like scalded hogs in their appearance." He rejoiced that the streets were well-marked, and, unlike in the United States, that the trains ran on time. He was delighted with the well-arranged homes, the warm rooms with the fine stoves (*kakelugnara*), and the richness of paintings and books which were in great contrast to the terrible scarcity of books and works of art in American homes. Skarstedt was convinced that, "The Swedish educational system was decisively superior to that of America in the categories of organization, order, and content." He was impressed with the practical emphasis upon craft and vocational studies.<sup>21</sup>

The contrast between the manners of people in Sweden and the United States was rather shocking to Ernst Skarstedt. The first thing which attracted his attention when he stepped on Swedish soil was

“the people’s politeness and consideration.” Many years of residence in America had made him “accustomed to the general American aggressiveness, the mens’ blunt behavior, and womens’ cold-blooded haughtiness, and the young peoples’ forwardness and cavalier manner toward older people.” In Sweden, “an indescribably pleasant impression” was made on him by the courtesy and good manners of the people everywhere. He had never really believed that “the difference could be as great as it is.” Moreover, Swedish hospitality was just as praiseworthy as it always had been. The conversation was much more pleasant than in America where there was “the everlasting talk about good or bad speculations, greater or smaller incomes, higher or lower prices for real estate and such things.”<sup>22</sup>

The American visitor believed that the Swedes were able to make life more meaningful than the Americans: “The repulsive American prudishness and superficiality has not gained a following here. People understand and love art and music and do not talk only about money and income. And then the Swedish language! The most melodious and beautiful of all languages. I am more happy and thankful than I can describe that I could renew knowledge of my motherland even if I am too much of a republican to be able to say: ‘I will live, and I will die in the North.’ ”<sup>23</sup>

## XII.

# RESTLESSNESS ABIDES

On August 18, 1916, Ernst returned to New York from Sweden on the *S. S. Stockholm*. After visiting Charles K. Johansen, Gust. Harald Nordqvist, and Vilhelm Berger at the *Nordstjernan* office, he spent much time in used bookstores and took a trip to Coney Island. He attempted in vain to see his old Kansas friend from the 1870s, Dr. Mauritz Stolpe, now pastor of Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church in New York. Enroute to Seattle, Ernst made a brief stay in Chicago, where he saw Johan Person and other old friends. The three days in Rock Island were pleasant as he visited with his son Marcus and with Bessie, his son's wife, and with Olof Grafström. Marcus was the librarian at Augustana College and Grafström was on the faculty at Augustana. On September 6 Ernst was back at East Sound, where Ellen met him. Esther and her three children were also there to greet him. The trip to Sweden had lasted five months.<sup>1</sup>

Ernst was fully occupied with many things upon his return to his home and farm. Approximately 900 newspapers had accumulated during his absence and he began a methodical plan to read the copies of each publication. Gifts from Sweden were distributed to the family and friends. There was much work to be done. One day he picked 436 peaches from four trees and chopped 200 pieces of kindling. Later that week he picked twenty dozen apples and in the morning he dug 140 hills of potatoes and 360 hills in the afternoon. There were other things to be done such as having the horse shod,



picking up a barrel of *knäckebröd* (crisp, hard rye bread) at West Sound that had been ordered from Seattle, and installing more bookshelves to accomodate the books which soon would be coming from Sweden.<sup>2</sup>

During October 1916 Ernst started working on an important manuscript that resulted in the book, *Svensk-Amerikanska folket i helg och söcken*, 450 pages, which was published by the well-known publishers, Björck and Börjesson, Stockholm, in 1917. Ernst made final arrangements for writing this comprehensive study during his visit in Sweden. He was occupied almost exclusively during these months with writing, demonstrating an amazing capacity for work. Moreover, he wrote easily; revision was not cumbersome nor time-consuming. This writing was a delightful experience for Ernst who had accumulated the material over a lifetime, bringing an intimate personal knowledge of the people whom he described so fully and sensitively.

The year 1917 opened on a pleasant note, which unfortunately was not typical of the succeeding months. Early in January Ernst entered the following in his diary: "January 8 M [Monday]. Rain the whole night, some in the evening. Completed the book [*Svensk-Amerikanska folket i helg och söcken*]. Mellie and Martha drove to West Sound in P.M. for salmon and shorts [feed]. I have received congratulations because I have been awarded the *Litteris et Artibus* medal according to Swedish newspapers. Letter congratulating me from Ch. K. Johansen, Johan Person, F. Larsson, G. N. Malm, F. W. Lönegren, and V. Berger."<sup>3</sup>

The good news about the award of the *Litteris et Artibus* medal cheered the rather depressed Ernst Skarstedt. This outstanding award for distinction in the arts and literature traced its origin to Prince Charles who later ascended the throne as King Charles XV (1859-1872). Only three Swedish Americans, J. A. Enander, the journalist, Ludvig Holmes, the poet, and Arvid Åkerlind, the musician, had received this honor. Since they were deceased, Ernst Skarstedt was the only living American who could wear this gold medal which had the King's image on one side and the words "*Litteris et Artibus*" in a wreath on the other side attached to a blue ribbon. Although Ernst never displayed the medal, he was genuinely pleased to receive it. *Svenska Kuriren* (Chicago) expressed the

feelings of many Swedish Americans: "There is nothing but rejoicing that veteran Skarstedt's many and productive years of work in behalf of Swedish culture in America have now been recognized and rewarded by Swedish authorities. If any Swedish American ever really earned such a distinction it is without question Ernst Skarstedt. We congratulate him."<sup>4</sup>

Ernst's response to this development is found in his diary: "Jan. 16 T [Tuesday] 23°. Wrote letters, among them one to the King as follows: 'Your Majesty, King Gustaf. I have read in the newspapers that the *Litteris et Artibus* medal has been awarded me. Permit me, although I feel unworthy of this recognition, to convey to Your Majesty my warm thanks for Your Majesty's friendliness in having me in your thoughts. With esteem and respect. E. Sdt.' The Kings' [neighbors] daughters here tonight."<sup>5</sup>

Although Ernst was pleased with events early in 1917, his spirits were low as spring came again to Orcas Island. The long trip to Sweden had perhaps brought some changes in Ernst and the fact of separation also affected the family. Moreover, Mellie and Martha were now young ladies. Ellen was deeply devoted to her daughters and was hopeful that they would have a happy and pleasant life. The situation was described partially by Ernst in April: "Ellen and the children and the teacher went to West Sound to a farewell for Burns. In my solitariness I consoled myself with a large drink, the first in several weeks. Went to bed late. The others came home at 4 A.M. Miss Hagen, the teacher, was with them."<sup>6</sup> It was customary for young people in West Sound and East Sound to gather regularly for dances that lasted until the early morning hours. This disturbed Ernst who lay sleepless wondering about his daughters, and concerned that Ellen seemed so passive about it. Time was moving on, and Ernst did not realize that the daughters were no longer little girls interested in kittens and ponies. Moreover, as Ellen reflected upon the years of hard work and economic insecurity she, too, exerted an understandable independence of spirit.

Early in March 1917 Ernst made arrangements with Bresbin, Smith, and Livesey at Bellingham to offer the Skarstedt farm for sale for \$4,300, including the house, furniture, livestock, etc. Ernst's feeling is found in his comment: "I am almost penniless and I lie awake for hours at night and brood." In early May he went on one

of his fairly frequent trips to Seattle. While staying at the King Karl Hotel he met two Swedes, and after some drinks together, he played the violin for them. They were greatly impressed with his performance and gave him \$1.50. Ernst's financial situation was critical because on May 15 he left the *Litteris et Artibus* medal, which he had been awarded in January, with a Seattle pawnbroker in return for ten dollars. The next day he went to Adelphi College where he spent interesting hours again with the books and pamphlets that had been in his father's library. That evening friends took him to a performance by the two famous Swedish comedians, Ole Olson and Harald Johnson. His friend Hugo Slettengren agreed to redeem the *Litteris et Artibus* medal if Ernst requested it.<sup>7</sup>

When Ernst returned to Orcas Island later that month he worked at various jobs, chopping kindling, repairing fences, taking care of the livestock, and preparing the soil for a vegetable garden. While engaged in the world of farming he took time also to read proof on the book *Svensk-Amerikanska folket i helg och söcken* which was being published in Stockholm. Good news came one day when Björck and Börjesson sent Ernst \$100, as an advance payment on his manuscript.<sup>8</sup>

Ernst was in Seattle again in the latter part of June. While there, he redeemed the *Litteris et Artibus* medal from the pawnbroker. The cost for using the ten dollars for six weeks was one dollar. After a few days visit with Seattle friends, where he was always welcome, and following a visit with B. J. Blomskog, a realtor, about the possible sale of the Columbia property, he returned to East Sound. Late in August he received news that the Columbia place had been sold for \$700. In September Ernst started work on a biography of Abraham Lincoln. He had collected many volumes on Lincoln across the years, and during his many trips to Seattle he did much research on Lincoln. The volume was published in 1918. The United States government purchased the right of publication and an edition was printed for distribution in Sweden.<sup>9</sup>

When Ernst reflected on his situation and that of his family, he saw no prospects for a good financial return from the Orcas Island farm. In the latter part of October he rented the farm to Alfred Bull. Ernst's economic situation after four and one-half years on Orcas Island is known, thanks to his unflinching habit of keeping detailed

statistics. His expenditures during that period included: Cows, \$275.00; hay, \$155.55; grain, \$174.20; other expenses (salt, bull service, help in butchering, etc.) \$56.30; for a total of \$661.05. He estimated that hay and grain grown on the farm, and fed to the livestock, were worth \$211.80, for a grand total expense of \$872.85. The income during the period was butter and milk, \$572.00; cows and calves, \$160.50; for a total of \$732.50. The value of products used in the household were estimated as follows: butter, \$88.65; milk and cream, \$54; meat butchered from animals, \$7.15; value of animals on hand at present prices, \$140; for a gross income of \$1,022.30. The excess of income over expenses was thus \$149.45 for the four-year period. One visitor observed relative to Skarstedt's role as a farmer, "He is brimful in the theory of agriculture but it is uncertain if he knows that the farmer's gold lies in and then out of the farmyard and that this gold must be spread with indefatigable energy."<sup>10</sup>

Although Ernst Skarstedt lived on Orcas Island far removed from the scene of the titantic struggle between nations in the tragedy of World War I, he was actively concerned and shared his ideas through newspaper articles. When World War I broke out in 1914, Ernst Skarstedt, like many others, was appalled that such a tragedy should occur. Moreover, he had been a great admirer of Tolstoy's view on war and peace. Ten years before the beginning of the conflict in 1914, Ernst had shared his anti-war position with his friend, Vilhelm Reslow saying: "I am fully convinced about that issue and I would not under any circumstances participate in war. If all people took my position, war could not occur." In September 1914 he wrote again to Reslow declaring, "I am absolutely a man of peace and I would under no circumstances fight against people whom I do not know and who have never given me any trouble. . . . I am certainly too cosmopolitan to become fired up with so-called patriotic feelings." In the same letter, however, he condemned the German Kaiser as being evil and the source of the misery of the current war.<sup>11</sup>

As the war progressed, Ernst began to have grave concern about what would happen in the event of a victory by the Central Powers. While in Sweden, in 1916, he had "denied positively that the United States would become involved in the war. The American people are

too wise to throw themselves into military adventures.” However, when the United States entered the conflict in April 1917, he supported the decision. His response to the war in Europe was clear: “After reading the President’s message to the special session of Congress, I have absolutely the strong feeling that after mature consideration he took the fateful step, and that he would not have done it if he had not had compelling reasons that make it impossible for him to do otherwise.” He lamented the necessity for “our country to be at war, but since conditions made it necessary, it behooves us to resist from criticizing and running down a government which has done as much as it could possibly do to avoid the tragedy.” He condemned the current German government which had abandoned its former role of promoting culture, and was now engaged in spreading death and desolation. As he contemplated alternatives he asked a pertinent question and then concluded: “What will be the result of all this? Bitter ruin and world devastation or peace and the rule of the people of all nations? We hope for the latter.”<sup>12</sup>

Although Ernst Skarstedt identified several causes of the war, he cited nationalism as the basic reason. This factor had produced more evil than good in the world. It had caused from time immemorial only “blood-letting enmity and hate among nations. It is the foundation for the bloodiest war that Europe has known. . . . It is an animalistic idea and witnesses to the poverty of refinement in thought and feeling. It is a form of egotism and love of self.” But in the midst of despair, he maintained, nevertheless, great optimism: “A time will come, although it can only now be imagined in the distant future, when nationalism will not be found, when all of mankind will be as one people and where no nation tries to lord it over the others. That time will come, when mankind in the correct and full meaning of the word becomes ‘civilized.’ ” Moreover, he envisioned in the future, “a United States of Europe which may still be a dream and a hope, but a beautiful and appealing dream which the friends of mankind reluctantly exclude from their thoughts. Sometime it will become a reality, even if the present generation will not experience it. Perhaps even sooner than we suspect, a new Thomas Paine or Benjamin Franklin will appear, ready to fire mankind’s suppressed feelings for freedom and lead us on the right road.”<sup>13</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt left Orcas Island after considerable discouragement with his efforts at farming and moved to Seattle where he lived between August 1918 and April 1919, although his family continued to live on the island. World War I was still going on when Ernst came to Seattle and consequently there was much activity in the shipyards. Andoll Anderson, a friend and admirer of Ernst, was the head machinist at the Patterson and McDonald shipyard and through him Ernst received employment there in August. When he signed on the payroll, he was No. 22985. Ernst's first response to his new employment was described by him in a letter to a friend: "I don't understand machinery any more than the man in the moon and I have no taste for it but I get along nevertheless. The work is not hard. The worst part is the constant climbing up and down on high and unsteady steps to the ship and into its interior. But I am now used to it. I work at night from 9:30 P.M. to 7 A.M." The *Puget Sound Posten* pointed out that this is "certainly a new calling for Ernst Skarstedt in his varied path of life."<sup>14</sup>

Ernst's principal assignment at the shipyard was to oil and polish machinery. There were long periods when there was nothing for him to do. Moreover, he was told not to be in a hurry to do the work. One day in September, a temporary boss was curt and profane. This disturbed Ernst who decided that the situation was intolerable. When he appeared at the exit gate before his normal hour of departure, he was asked if he was ill. He replied: "I don't feel well," which certainly described his mental situation. Ernst then left the place. He returned to the job the next day, realizing that the regular, more pleasant foreman would be there. Andoll Anderson recalled that one day Ernst disappeared from the job. The search for him was in vain. There was considerable anxiety that he might have lost his balance on the rickety gangplank, fallen into the water and drowned. Then Mr. L. rushed up with the good news that the missing man had been found. The day was balmy and sunny and Ernst had fallen asleep in a low roll of cable. Anderson requested that Ernst not be disturbed because the whistle would awaken him later. When that time came, Ernst was considerably embarrassed, but since he was among friends and admirers there was no problem. When employment came to an end at the Patterson and McDonald shipyard, a friend arranged for a job for him, in November, with Meacham and

Babcock, another shipyard. Ernst went with great reluctance to the Mechanic's Hall, paid his union fees, and received his union card. The wages were good and Ernst needed the money.<sup>15</sup>

Except for the brief periods when Ernst worked at shipyards he had no regular employment. He spent his time reading, writing articles for Swedish American newspapers, playing the violin, and visiting with friends. He lived at several places, including six weeks in Captain T. Tronsen's houseboat. His longest residence of five months was in "a large, cold, and dark room" on the second story of a house on Sixth Avenue. This was a difficult time for many people, largely because of the changes produced by a nation at war. In October 1918 Ernst observed evidence of the influenza epidemic because people on streetcars and elsewhere wore masks to avoid germ infection. He bought a yard of gauze for that purpose. His days were occasionally brightened in this era of prohibition when friends would share drinks or when his friend, Dr. Will Lovering, wrote out a prescription so that he could purchase alcohol. A bottle of brandy would normally cost eight dollars.<sup>16</sup>

In September 1918 Ernst and his friends had to deny the rumor that he was dead. The *Nordiska Presscentralen* in Sweden announced on September 13, that he had been killed on the battle front. This glaring error was based on the false translation and interpretation of a Reuter's dispatch from Washington which read: "Washington's day casualty list includes killed private Reinhold Benson next kin P. Benson, Oskara, Sweden. (Stop) Seattle, Ernst Skarstedt Swedish-American journalist among professional men working shipbuilding plant war period." Fortunately, Gunnar Wickman, Ernst's friend, was in Sweden and soon corrected the error. He pointed out that the news about Ernst Skarstedt's death, in the language of Mark Twain, was "highly exaggerated."<sup>17</sup>

The year 1919 was not an especially happy year for Ernst, although there were pleasant times. January gave him the opportunity in Seattle to hear recitals by Schumann-Heink, the great singer, and by Joseph Hoffman, the famous concert pianist. Ellen came occasionally to see him in Seattle. Martha was now working there, having completed a business college course while staying with her older and generous friend, Mrs. Church. Father and daughter were together often and in the evenings they played duets on the

violin and piano. He continued to write articles for Swedish-American newspapers. Ernst was engaged in the late spring and summer in writing a biography of Theodore Roosevelt. The volume was finished in August. His many friends entertained him almost daily, but since prohibition was being enforced, the drinks were less numerous and often consisted of the "home-made variety" produced by distillation apparatus. Ernst could scarcely find words to express adequately his contempt for the folly and stupidity of the invasion of privacy that prohibition produced.<sup>18</sup>

Since life in Seattle was not really satisfying, he sought again the quiet of Puget Sound, this time on the eastern section of San Juan Island near Friday Harbor. In June 1919 he sold his Orcas Island farm for \$3,600. He then rented a small house near Friday Harbor from the Owen family. He later bought another farm. His diary for October 21 reads: "T [Tuesday]. Stormy weather. Sweeney came with the deed and abstract and I bought his farm and I paid \$1,150 for it, including the furniture and gave him a mortgage for \$300, to be paid the seventh. Chopped 500 pieces of kindling." Ellen did not share the enthusiasm of Ernst's plans. Her response is understandable in the context of the vagabond nature of their lives. Ernst's journal shows that since their marriage, he had lived at thirty-five different addresses for shorter or longer periods. Moreover, Ellen wished to be closer to her daughters and she knew that the opportunities for them at Friday Harbor were meager. In November Ernst recorded in his diary the response of Ellen: "Don't think that I am going to stay there [Friday Harbor]." In addition to the further isolation at Friday Harbor, Ernst's new place was very small and lacking in attractiveness. When Ernst sent a photograph of it to Marcus, his son, the latter wrote to his father in December: "I think that you should plan to rebuild that house. You must compromise with your wife on that score for she has of course the same right to surroundings in accord with her liking as you have in accord with yours."<sup>19</sup>

Ernst was lonesome at times but he often visited with the Frechettes, Kings, Taylors, and others. Although he was an individualist with certain eccentricities, people liked him and seemed to enjoy his company. Moreover, he spent much time walking, reading, writing, and giving occasional violin lessons. He had always enjoyed



the writings of Mark Twain, whose works were in his library from early years. Björck and Börjesson, Stockholm publishers, had asked him to translate into Swedish Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*. Ernst completed the translation of the book in December, noting in his diary that the last ninety pages required thirty-five hours for translation and thirty-four hours for revision.<sup>20</sup>

The general anxiety and uncertainty in the life of Ernst Skarstedt during this period is reflected in the articles which he wrote for the Swedish American press. He expressed deep-seated fears relative to the future of America. In June 1918 he struggled with the problem created by the actions of groups of agitators, especially the Non-Partisan League, and the appropriate democratic view of dissent. He observed that direct action was being taken in communities against people who were under suspicion of disloyalty, describing in considerable detail the use of tar and feathers at Winlock and Monroe, Washington, and elsewhere. His concern was expressed as he wrote: "In a nation that wishes to be considered civilized . . . Judge Lynch ought never to have authority. People ought never to take the law into their own hands, and tar and feather, and even kill violators instead of bringing them before legally elected officials and a judge or jury to determine their fate." He concluded that there must be some pressing reason for the widespread resort to "lynch law": "Perhaps the people had no confidence in those responsible for public safety. Moreover, the threat from conspirators was not taken seriously. If law seemed helpless and defenceless, it was understandable that the people would respond in their own illegal way."<sup>21</sup>

As the postwar years moved on, Skarstedt became increasingly alarmed over the course of events. In December 1919 he expressed grave concern about the threat of the communists, the IWW, and other conspirators who were becoming more of a menace because of the American people's indifference and good nature. The government's indulgence and the loose application of restrictions on immigration permitted thousands of undesirable people to immigrate and live in the United States. Moreover, he felt that the spirit of American society was in error: "Instead of labor disputes, strikes, emphasis upon shorter work periods and less production, what is needed for prosperity is more work, greater industriousness, eager-

ness to achieve, and thrift." The flirtation with Bolshevism and "other idiotic theories" must be resisted, he thought, and "those who are not mature enough in intelligence and moral judgment, have no business here. The nation must protect itself against the treachery and violence of those who seek to undermine American democracy." He foresaw the time when undesirable persons in large numbers would be driven out of the country and their kindred spirits would be prohibited from coming here or being smuggled in.<sup>22</sup>

The threat from anarchists and communists concerned Ernst Skarstedt again as is evident in an article in *Vestkusten*, in September 1920. He was distressed that American officials and the public generally failed to take proper cognizance of bombings and other overt acts. He attributed the situation to undue forbearance with the rascals through the manifestation of unjustified optimism which saw nothing threatening or dangerous in the misuse of freedom of speech and press and simply sought to explain away and excuse unmistakable satanic acts. He was enthusiastic in his support of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's proceedings against those who seemed to be a threat to the nation. Skarstedt declared, "The whole anarchistic conspiracy must be uprooted at the earliest possible time. . . . Under no circumstances should any pardon be given. Political bombers and stone throwers, bolsheviks and anarchistic agitators and inciters have no right to live in a republic."<sup>23</sup>

When Ernst Skarstedt reflected on "the bewilderment in thought and action" that prevailed at the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century, he sought an explanation. He concluded, "It must have been the war which has made the people so disposed to excesses, so unreasonable and inconsiderate in their demands, so selfish and troublesome, and so incapable of thinking moderately and clearly." Moreover, he concluded, "After a war, people do things they would not otherwise do; they lose their balance and become abnormal." Since "the world was out of joint," the economy was unstable and prices were on a rampage. He ridiculed attempts at boycotts of stores by women's groups and the reformers pleas for price fixing. Skarstedt proposed that the production cost and sales prices should be printed on each item. However, he believed that, in the course of time, prices would be determined by the supply and demand forces in the market place.

His solution for bringing about normal conditions was "work and production." There was one issue that disturbed him greatly. Oregon had passed "the terrible, idiotic law" which made it illegal in that state to print, publish, sell, or even show any newspaper, pamphlet, or periodical in any other language than English unless the entire contents were presented likewise in literal English translation. He wrote sarcastically that Congress could pass a similar law, "and then we can rejoice in a Republic that not only becomes so sober that the people drink themselves to death on wood alcohol but also it becomes so patently American that only by smuggling and visits to hidden shops can one buy foreign literature. Secret saloons for those thirsty for alcohol and secret shops for those who can read. Think how fine."<sup>24</sup>

Since 1920 was the year for the new federal decennial census, Ernst qualified by examination for the position of census taker in his area. He started his work on January 2, spending the time between 8 A.M. and 6 P.M. in recording thirty names while walking five miles. He worked faithfully for two weeks in his territory which included the south one-third of San Juan. When his records were completed, he had provided census data for 323 people, ranging from the age of three to eighty-nine. He tallied 184 horses, 584 cattle, 662 swine, 2,874 sheep, and 3,855 chickens, turkeys, geese and ducks. He found people in the economic range of poverty to the owner of property worth \$20,000. Ernst found this assignment a pleasant one as he talked with Indians, lumberjacks, farmers, immigrants, and others. He received \$100 in compensation.<sup>25</sup>

Although Ellen had been most reluctant to live in Friday Harbor, she spent a considerable amount of time there. She readily adjusted herself to new situations and made friends easily. Ellen's fiftieth birthday was observed January 28 when Ernst bought a cake for eighty cents. Neighbors came often and the Skarstedt's returned the visits. One of the neighbors, Mr. Whitely, brought his distilling apparatus and during the evenings Ernst and he made drinks which were described by Ernst as "the strong kind."<sup>26</sup>

This year was an important one for the Skarstedts because in June 1920, Ernst left Friday Harbor and his family to live alone in New York until he returned to Seattle in June 1926. In November 1919, Charles K. Johansen, publisher of *Nordstjernen*, the well-

known Swedish American newspaper in New York, had written to Ernst: "If you contemplate coming out of the glorious West and care about coming to New York, you know you can have a job with me. Let me know how you feel about it. Will send you a ticket to come to the best little town in the world . . . Hope you are well and without spirits. We get along well without booze. Al. of ½ percent is all we get now, excepting if you know the ropes." In January 1920, Ernst informed G. N. Malm, his friend at Lindsborg, Kansas, about Johansen's offer, but confided to Malm: "I cannot bring myself to do it. I am too accustomed to freedom and I enjoy my life in the country on the edge of the world. I am becoming old and I can just as well die here as any other place."<sup>27</sup>

Johansen again wrote to Ernst in May 1920 urging him to come to New York. This time it was a firm and specific offer to succeed Gust. Harald Nordqvist in the editorial department. The latter was leaving for Sweden in June. Ernst's salary was to be thirty dollars per week, plus the publisher's assurance that "you will share with the rest of us in the profits." In the latter part of May, Ernst informed Johansen that he would accept the offer and shortly thereafter Johansen sent \$125 to Ernst for the trip. On June 13, Ernst was on his way to New York.<sup>28</sup>

Several factors caused Ernst to make the decision that changed his place of residence for more than five years. He was unhappy and restless. Perhaps he had romanticized life in nature, with attendant economic hardships and uneven places in his relations with his family, and belatedly realized there were some limitations to this way of life. The persistent attempt of Johansen to bring Ernst to New York stimulated a new feeling of self-respect and confidence which was reaching a low ebb as he struggled without much joy and satisfaction to find meaning in life. The challenge of full-time employment and stable income, although his age was well into the sixties, held the promise of being a pleasing alternative to the uncertainty that seemed to be ahead of him at Friday Harbor.

An interesting insight into the financial situation of Ernst after his many years in the United States is found in a letter that he wrote to his friend Nils Gillgren in March 1920. The entry in Ernst's diary for that date reads: "In 41 years I have earned as editor, author, musician, photographer, carpenter, etc., \$20,653.90. But when

income and loss in farming and property, and the newspaper in Kansas and San Francisco, are taken into account and 5 percent included on my capital expenditures, my income has been \$19,156.55 or \$467.25 per year, plus the rent of \$2,855.35 or \$69.50 per year, gifts and inheritance \$6,578.35, or \$160.45 per year for a total of \$697.20 per year.”<sup>29</sup>

Ernst’s life had been far from affluent in this world’s goods from the time he left his parental home. Life had been sustained for his family and himself only amidst considerable hardship and deprivation. However, Ernst had enriched life for many people through his talents in conversation, music, and writing, which had resulted in many books and thousands of newspaper articles. Moreover, in New York he was to have a busy professional and personal life that was exceedingly productive before he returned to his beloved Pacific Northwest for the last time.



Ernst (1910)



A. O. Assar, Ernst and Tobias Sandegren (1914)



Ernst and Gunnar Wickman (1915)



Caricature of Ernst, "How he looks and how he should look." (1915)



Marcus, Mellie, Bessie, Martha,  
Ellen, Vera and Ernst (1914)



Swedish-American journalists aboard  
*S. S. Stockholm* (1916)



Ernst with brothers Conrad and  
Waldemar and Ellen Tretow  
in Lund, Sweden (1916)

Conrad, Waldemar and  
Ernst (1916)



Ernst in Augustana College  
Library (1916)



Ellen, Martha, Mellie and Ernst  
outside Orcas Island, Puget  
Sound home (1917)







Ernst (1919)



Ernst and Marcus (1916)



Ernst Skovsted, May 1924

Ernst of L. François Kaufman, New York

Ernst (1924)

*Nordstjernan* personnel: Wilhelm Berger,  
Charles Nieckels—top row; Ernst and  
Ch. K. Johansen (1922)

## XIII

# THE NEW YORK YEARS

The life of Ernst Skarstedt was characterized by many sharp contrasts and once again in 1920 this pattern prevailed. In June 1920 he left the rather idyllic area of Friday Harbor, on San Juan Island in Puget Sound, to accept the position as editor of *Nordstjernen* in New York City. Instead of the freedom of movement and the quiet that the small cottage and peaceful countryside on San Juan Island provided, he was now thrust into the rush and noise of a large city. For almost six years he went each day from his room at 132 East Forty-third Street to the office of *Nordstjernen* at 108 Park Row where he regularly climbed the ninety-two steps to the sixth floor.

Although Ernst Skarstedt had never been on the staff of the influential New York Swedish American newspaper, he had served at various times as a correspondent and, in 1916, he had represented it when Swedish American journalists visited Sweden. More articles and comments had appeared from his pen in *Nordstjernen* than in any other newspaper except San Francisco's *Vestkusten*. The current publisher, Charles K. Johansen, was anxious to secure the services of Skarstedt as editor of his weekly paper which traced its origin to 1872 when a Swedish Publishing Company had been organized with Carl Nordell as the leading force.

Ernst's life in New York was not lacking in interests and resources, his love of music being his greatest source of pleasure. New

York offered unrivalled opportunities for attending concerts and recitals. He shared many wonderful experiences in Carnegie Hall, Town Hall, Aeolian Hall, and all the well-known concert halls. His journal for that period records 383 musical events of various kinds where he had been an enthusiastic listener. He attended eighty-four concerts in Carnegie Hall. It was with great enthusiasm that Ernst left the office for an evening of good music and he often spent Saturday and Sunday afternoons as well at a concert or recital. He heard almost all the great instrumental and vocal performers, the New York Philharmonic, the London String Quartette, other symphony orchestras, and instrumental and vocal ensembles. In this era of great violin virtuosos he heard Jascha Heifetz, Fritz Kreisler, Mischa Elman, Erika Morini, Albert Spaulding, Efrem Zimbalist, among others. He was thrilled by the vocal *récitals* of Galli-Curci, John McCormack, Frieda Hempel, Marie Sundelius, Margarete Matzenauer, Dusolina Giannini, and Reinald Werrenrath. He frequently attended the Metropolitan Opera where *Rigoletto* was one of his favorites.<sup>1</sup>

Although Ernst's greatest devotion was to music, he also attended many lectures. He was interested in spiritualism, as evidenced by his wide reading on the subject and occasional participation in seances throughout his life. The lecture on spiritualism by Conan Doyle, the famous creator of Sherlock Holmes, at Carnegie Hall in May 1922 was especially rewarding. The lecture by Sven Hedin, the famous Swedish explorer, at Columbia University in March 1923 was another highlight. Books on exploration provided undoubtedly the major subject matter for Ernst's extensive reading across the years. Ernst's interest in phrenology brought him to the lecture by C. B. Shaw in the hall of the Phrenological Society in March 1923. Ernst's diary continually records visits to bookstores and libraries.<sup>2</sup>

Ernst had developed an interest in spiritualism in the 1880s when he lived in Chicago, a period when he was associated with several people involved in the practice, including Jakob Bonggren, an editor with *Svenska Amerikanaren*. When seeking answers to questions following the death of Anna, he had attended seances. This recurring but not enthusiastic interest was also a part of his New York years. Early in October 1922 he shared the following experience as recorded in his diary: "Sandberg came tonight and invited me to go

with him to Mrs. Cook's seance. 16 people there. Anna (?) [Ernst's first wife] came and talked to me. 'How are you darling? *Jag är alltid hos dig* [I am always with you].' A voice sang a beautiful Swedish verse that I had never heard before. Sandberg's deceased wife sang also, 'In a Short Little Time,' and said to me that Anna was there. 'Who are you?' I asked. 'I am Mrs. Sandberg,' was the answer. This is truly incomprehensible. Sandberg treated with tea afterwards. We walked all the way home."<sup>3</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt is often thought of as being a recluse who enjoyed living in a forest home far from people. This is indeed one aspect of his life, but the record shows convincingly that he was also a social person who enjoyed the company of others. Ernst soon established a wide circle of friends in New York. There were many reasons for this development. His diary records unfailingly, and also with some monotony, the names, places, types of alcoholic beverage, and the number of drinks which he had day after day and week after week with friends and associates. The prohibition law was somewhat of a handicap but the frequent drinks that Ernst and his friends enjoyed is eloquent testimony of its ineffectiveness. Although Ernst enjoyed beer, wine, and whiskey, and drank sizeable amounts of these, there is no evidence that he used them to excess. Perhaps this honest man recalled that he had promised Anna in the rather turbulent years in Chicago during the 1880s, that he would never drink to the point of losing control of himself. He visited with many people under various circumstances. One of the festive occasions for Ernst was the annual party that C. K. Johansen sponsored for the personnel of *Nordstjernan*.

People often sought and consulted with Ernst Skarstedt. Professor Helge Nelson, the well-known Swedish author and geographer, who had made an extensive study tour of the life of the Swedes in America, was in New York in September 1925. Prior to returning to Sweden, he met several times with Ernst. Professor Adolph B. Benson of Yale, a well-known academic person, was a frequent visitor. Common literary interests brought Edward Sundell, a fine Swedish American poet, and Ernst into close friendship. In April 1925 a young student at Upsala College, Evald B. Lawson recognized Ernst in Bonnier's bookstore. The young man, himself a gifted poet and violinist, was thrilled when Ernst invited him to his

residence and listened as young Lawson, the future, distinguished president of Upsala College, East Orange, New Jersey, played three violin solos for him. One day the interesting Björling musical family came to the office of *Nordstjernen*, including father and three sons who had been on a concert tour in America. One of the sons, Jussi, was destined to become an internationally-known tenor.<sup>4</sup>

The New York years were busy and productive for Ernst Skarstedt. The record shows that during this period of almost six years he wrote and published 1,960 editorials, feature articles, book reviews, and news summaries. These items were published in *Nordstjernen*, except for a modest number that appeared in *Vestkusten*, *Svenska Amerikanaren*, and in newspapers published in Sweden. Ernst's diaries contain a multitude of entries which indicate that he worked hard in the office and at home. It was not uncommon for him to write until four or five o'clock in the morning. A summary of his hours of work for the year 1923 showed the following: "This year I have worked at home for *Nordstjernen* 796 hours (15.30 hours per week), excluding the Sunday work on the *Times*, for 2 hours. I have worked for *Svenska Amerikanaren* 175 hours (3.36 hours per week). Other extra work has amounted to 24 hours."<sup>5</sup>

C. K. Johansen, the publisher of *Nordstjernen*, responded generously to Ernst's efforts and increased his salary, and provided fringe benefits. When Ernst accepted the editorship he was assured of a salary of thirty dollars per week, and that he would share with the rest of the staff in the profits. In May 1924 Ernst's salary was increased to thirty-five dollars per week, and in January 1926 it was raised to forty dollars per week. In addition, Ernst received a bonus of at least \$125 per year in keeping with the agreement of sharing in the profits.<sup>6</sup>

The editorial activities of Ernst Skarstedt in *Nordstjernen* covered a wide range of subjects including the big issues that confronted the nation and the world in the 1920s. Skarstedt's stalwart individualism made him an unfailing champion of capitalism and the constant enemy of socialism and communism. In 1920 he wrote: "The capitalistic system extends its healthful results to every member of society. . . . Private ownership, that is capitalism, is and always will be necessary for mankind's freedom and welfare.

Capitalism, or the preservation of possessions, is then not something to despise, be ashamed of, or condemn. On the contrary, it is something that should be encouraged and sought." However, Skarstedt was hostile to the "robber baron" concept of capitalism. The kind of capitalism that expresses itself "in exploitation and monopoly is just as much an enemy of society and the right kind of capitalism as any supporter of Bolshevism and its American representatives, IWW." He advocated, "ceaseless surveillance in order to prevent abuses or to punish them if they occur."<sup>7</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt was critical of governmental interference in the economy. He pointed out that, "as soon as government takes over some business, there is a deficit or costs go up so fast that there is no profit. Many wonder why this happens and how the socialist-dogooders with this experience before their eyes can maintain the idea that everything would be cheaper if only the government took over all business enterprises."<sup>8</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt was exceedingly hostile toward labor unions. In September 1920 he attacked a statement by Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, who had suggested that the labor unions and farmers had much in common. In referring to his experience as a member of a union when employed in shipbuilding in the World War I era, Skarstedt declared:

Talk about them as unselfish and sympathizing with farmers! I have never met a bunch of more selfish, unfeeling men than those were. They talked about nothing else than calling strikes, getting the already abnormally high wages raised, introducing a revolution, bringing on Russian conditions, which they praised as being far ahead of conditions here. . . . Their unreasonable, idiotic talk and ideas made me mad at last; I couldn't bear to be with such people, and simply quit.<sup>9</sup>

The view that Ernst Skarstedt maintained relative to the relationship of the government to individuals was dramatically stated in his editorial, "A New Crazy Constitutional Amendment," attacking the child labor proposal in August 1924. He argued that there was a distinct mania among some members of Congress "to patch and repair" the Constitution of the United States. He resented the proposal that Congress, instead of parents, would decide how the time of children could be used. If the Congress continued to amend the Constitution "with these idiotic proposals," the greatness of the

organic document would be destroyed. He argued that the child labor amendment "clearly is bolshevism in its crassest form, and completely unworthy of a republic, a nation which brags about its freedom, enlightenment, and respect for work and enterprise." Abuses in child labor, he thought, should be handled by state legislation. If the proposed amendment were ratified, it would produce an unbearable situation. He also concurred with the statement: "That foreign influences lie behind this proposal seems incontestable to many newspapers—influences which stealthily seek to strangle freedom in this country and appropriate control over this government for themselves. . . . Now is the time to build a dam for such radical propositions and aberrations of a free government."<sup>10</sup>

The contrast of Americanism with communism as understood by Skarstedt was a frequent theme in his editorials and comments. In 1922 he wrote: "Americanism implies rule of the people based on proven, recognized, and good principles whose application in practical life has built this land and made it the richest and greatest nation in the world. Bolshevism means despotism under the guise of power from the proletariat, a government based on socialistic and communistic fantasies, whose application in practical life always brings distress and failure and has sunk the only nation that has tried it on a big scale into the most helpless and tragic situation one can visualize." Moreover, he portrayed the contrast between life in the United States and the Soviet Union:

Americans promote family and home life; the Bolsheviks are its enemies and try to destroy it. . . . Americanism affirms that love of country is a virtue; Bolshevism prostitutes the idea of internationalism. Americanism leaves other nations alone; Bolshevism seeks by deceit and rancour to spread its poison in all nations, stirs people against their government, and converts them to the crazy Bolshevik teachings. That some of the Bolsheviks have a screw loose cannot be doubted, but some actually believe that conditions can be improved by placing power in the hands of the poorest, most incompetent, and most ignorant elements of the population. Others are simply demagogues who work only for their own advantage.<sup>11</sup>

Skarstedt's opposition to the diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States was firm and clear. He emphasized in August 1923, "There is no excuse for the American government to recognize the Russian government, which achieved its apparent

stability only by murdering a million or more of its most intelligent citizens, which cold-bloodedly repudiated its international debts, which strangled freedom of press and speech, which enslaved the working class that it had promised to liberate, and which has tried to poison other nations with its criminal philosophy.”<sup>12</sup>

Skarstedt's hostility to communism was unabated to the end of his life as is shown in an editorial in *Nordstjernen* in 1925: “Much already has appeared to show that the Russian has not really changed; he has only changed his appearance, and adopted the former aristocracy's infamous, horrid methods: spying, police violence, brutality, and lies against those who think differently. . . . The Bolsheviks show no understanding, statesmanship, or patience. One cannot refashion a hundred million half-barbarians into a cultured nation through some drastic proclamations or brutal proceedings.”<sup>13</sup>

The role of politicians in American life was criticized severely by Skarstedt. He argued that “most of the politicians are little more than weathervanes who change their direction with the slightest puff of wind. They are willing to initiate or support any absurd legislative stupidity if they think they can win some popularity or in some way become famous.” Similarly, he despaired of reformers:

In every nation that has a free form of government, there is a great group of alleged, self-appointed reformers who are engaged in ceaseless activity to create disorder and annoyances. It is impossible for them to leave anything alone. Limited, stupid, small-minded, and bigoted as they are, they imagine that Providence has endowed them with supervisory favor over the whole creation and every idea which originates in their dried-up brains is so excellent that by fair means or foul must be imposed on all the rest of mankind.<sup>14</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt had been a champion of minority groups, especially of the Orientals in the Pacific states, but his attitude changed decisively in this period. In April 1920 he had come to the conclusion in an article, “The Japanese Danger,” that Japanese residents were a threat to America. He argued that the Japanese population had doubled in the decade since 1910; numbers alone posed problems for the future. Moreover, he contended that the Japanese believed that the Japanese empire and emperor should rule the world. In contrast with the Chinese, who were meek and obedient, the Japanese were aggressive, resourceful, cunning, and harbored great thoughts about their superiority and that of their



government, system, and future influence. Earlier, he had opposed strenuously the Oregon law which had placed severe restrictions on foreign language newspapers and periodicals. He had now modified that opposition. He argued that if the aggressiveness of the Japanese and their secret propaganda were not stopped soon, deplorable results would follow.<sup>15</sup>

When William Jennings Bryan and Charles Darrow in 1925 were antagonists in the famous Scopes trial in Tennessee on the issue of evolution, Ernst Skarstedt praised Darrow's position and lamented that of Bryan. The issue here for Skarstedt was freedom of thought and respect for the findings of science. As a great and knowledgeable lover of nature, he saw no conflict between evolution and the order and glory of creative forces in the natural universe. The editor of *Nordstjernen* associated the Scopes trial with a pattern of development that threatened a free society as he observed: "There are three threats to American freedom: The Anti-Saloon league, the Fundamentalists, and the Ku Klux Klan. They think that they alone know what is right."<sup>16</sup>

Although Ernst Skarstedt admired the thought of Charles Darwin and embraced the theory of evolution, he went beyond that point to indicate certain unfinished business:

Scientists ought to acknowledge and formulate the limitations of evolution. We thoughtlessly talk about evolution as a scientifically proven teaching, applicable to the whole world system. It is by no means that and with great certainty will not be that for a long time. The theory of evolution is nothing but a description of how the development took place. It gives us no explanation of what was the first cause for the development.

He suggested that it would be appropriate for theologians and scientists to explore honestly the relationship of evolution to religion. He thought that such sharing of knowledge and viewpoints would diminish the dogmatic condemnation of evolution by some people while at the same time it might lead to a statement on "what science does not know."<sup>17</sup>

The diary of Ernst Skarstedt offers interesting evidence of life in New York during the prohibition era of the 1920s. There was apparently no problem in getting drinks at the Café des Artistes or at the many other places that Ernst and his friends frequented. The private supply of liquor flowed freely but Ernst complained that it

was often of the "home-made kind." Excerpts from Ernst's diary in August 1923 indicate the situation:

Aug. 16. Sundell came to see me at 5. Offered him two drinks. One of C. K. J.'s [the publisher of *Nordstjernan*] bootleggers, Dorf, a Swede, came to the office with his suitcase and reported that a policeman, who rode with him in his automobile, broke out one of the bottles and said: "I wish that I didn't have to go on my job. I would like to stay with you." Berger and Nickels each bought a bottle from him, White Horse Whiskey, for \$5. He promised to bring one to me. August 18. Went home at 12. Sandberg came in the afternoon offered 3 drinks. I offered 1 and he 2 beers in a saloon. August 24. Dorf came with a bottle of White Horse which I bought for \$5. Went home at 5.

Ernst continued his strong opposition to the hypocrisy and stupidity of the Volstead Act. He wrote several editorials in *Nordstjernan* condemning this legislation and the spirit of lawlessness that accompanied it. He also was interested in the anti-prohibition movement and attended meetings of the group. Early in June 1921 he signed up as a participant in a huge anti-prohibitionist parade. In July 1921 he received \$21.80 for an article attacking prohibition in *Göteborgs Handels-och Sjöfarts-Tidning*, the well-known Swedish newspaper. In July of the following year, he received \$51.81 for similar articles that appeared in *Stockholms-Tidningen*.<sup>18</sup>

A whole continent separated Ernst in New York from his family in the state of Washington. There was some correspondence and on birthdays and at Christmas Ernst received gifts from Ellen and the children. He sent money to Ellen from time to time but the extent of his participation in the support of the family was modest. Mellie was married and Martha was employed in Seattle. In April 1921 Ellen indicated to Ernst that she planned to move from Friday Harbor to Seattle. Martha was there and she wanted Vera and Martha to be together. Ellen informed Ernst, "I don't want to sit here any longer." Her's was a lonesome life and there were no opportunities for employment at Friday Harbor. In July 1922 Ellen informed Ernst that Vera and she had moved to Seattle where they rented a furnished house for twenty dollars a month from the Rumin family. The Skarstedt's furniture had been sold for \$149, except the piano which was brought to Seattle. Ernst's books had been packed and stored with the Carters at Friday Harbor. Ellen had also placed an

advertisement in the newspaper announcing that the house and three acres of land were for rent or sale. Ellen found employment in Seattle. In a letter in November 1922 Ernst explained to Vilhelm Reslow the economic factors that caused him to be separated from his family. As indicated above, his family rented a furnished house in Seattle for \$20 a month; he paid \$25 per month in New York for one room located on the fifth floor. It would cost at least \$80 a month to rent a furnished house in New York. Moreover, the travel expense of each of the three members of the family would be \$130.<sup>19</sup>

Although Ernst Skarstedt was busy and enjoyed many aspects of life in New York, there were times when he was quite unhappy. In November 1922 he again shared his feelings with Vilhelm Reslow: "I have often felt tempted to leave it all and return to the West, but the thought that I could not earn anything there, while I have good income here, has helped me to repress my longing thus far regardless of how much I felt ill at ease. You have no idea of the great difference there is between the East and the West. . . . When I am in the East, I think that I am not in America. I will never be able to adjust myself to people and circumstances here."<sup>20</sup>

When the time came for Ernst to leave *Nordstjernen*, the separation was made without ceremony. In a letter to Karl Hellberg he wrote: "Yesterday, March 4, 1926, was my last day at the newspaper. The night before I wrote up domestic and foreign news and a couple of columns of book reviews which altogether took 7½ hours. That was for the next issue. I didn't want to leave anything unfinished. The boss hasn't said anything about my leaving. . . . When I left the office yesterday only he and S-n [Eric Sylvan] were there. B-r [Vilhelm Berger] and the telephone girl are never there on Saturdays. I left as usual without saying anything."<sup>21</sup>

There had been some problems between Johansen, the publisher, and Ernst. In December 1924 Ernst recorded, "Johansen asked how much I get paid for writing against prohibition. He and others believe that I earn big money doing that." This was, of course, an absurd statement and Johansen was scarcely a prohibitionist. However, the major factor in Ernst's decision to leave *Nordstjernen* was his desire to return to the Pacific West which had the greatest attraction for him. In retrospect it seems almost incredible that this vagabond had

lived and worked almost six years in the New York of the 1920s. Ernst's departure was further delayed as described by him: "When I was ready to pack my books in order to return to my family in Seattle, I became ill with nervous prostration and was in bed for a couple of weeks. I am much better now, but it will require still several weeks before I will be ready to travel."<sup>22</sup>

It is apparent from the evidence that Ernst had planned to leave *Nordstjernan* earlier than his final separation in March 1926. In July 1925 Ellen wrote a persuasive letter saying, "Don't sit there alone any longer." In urging him to come home she pointed out that his old friend and associate in New York, C. O. Carlson, was dead, and that he should also leave the annoying problems that he often faced at the *Nordstjernan* office. In February 1926 Ernst received a cheerful letter from Martha who wrote: "I am so happy to hear that you are coming home soon. Won't that be fun? I go around thinking about it all the time. If only Marcus and Bessie do not keep you with them the whole summer."<sup>23</sup>

On May 6, 1926, Skarstedt boarded in New York the motor boat *Manchuria* for the slow journey to San Diego. This turned out to be a most pleasant voyage. The passage was smooth, the accommodations were comfortable, and the crew and passengers were cordial. The world of newspaper deadlines, with its exacting demands, was behind him. No longer did he need to seek the indulgence of the printers nor listen to the complaints of readers. His economic situation was better than it had been during most of his life. As the ship moved along at an unhurried pace, he spent long and pleasant hours reading. Moreover, he played the violin on several occasions much to the delight of the passengers and himself.<sup>24</sup>

When the boat came to Havana Ernst eagerly went on land for the few hours that were designated for this excursion. His was a special mission, namely, to drink a toast to grandfather Abraham Skarstedt who died there in 1820 from yellow fever, while an officer on a Swedish ship. His father had warned Ernst never to go to Cuba which was the land of this dreaded disease. But all this was changed by 1926. Ernst described this experience: "Thus I stood there peacefully and happily in the seaman's saloon and drank a toast to my grandfather's memory, closing my eyes and trying to imagine that his spirit was hovering over me and that he was thanking me for

my consideration and good intent. In order to assure myself that I was carrying out my task appropriately, I repeated the ceremony at two other saloons.”<sup>25</sup>

The *Manchuria* moved leisurely through the Panama Canal, and at Panama City he went sight-seeing. He wrote and mailed fifteen scenic post cards, took several photos of interesting places, drank ten glasses of beer, and bought whiskey to take with him. When the journey continued toward San Diego, he lounged on the deck for hours at a time and enjoyed pleasant conversations with the passengers. In the afternoon he played violin solos or duets with a fellow passenger. The *Manchuria* arrived in San Diego on May 21. He was met the next day at Los Angeles, by Marcus, his son, now a professor of mathematics and librarian at Whittier College. Ernst then rode in Marcus’ auto the ten miles to Whittier where for several days he was a guest of Bessie and Marcus.<sup>26</sup>

Marcus accompanied his father on a visit to his daughter Mellie, and her husband, Nils Hildingson, who operated a fruit farm near Arvin, 150 miles inland. Hildingson then took Ernst by auto to Fresno and Kingsburg eighty miles distant, where he visited old friends. On June 11 he was in San Francisco and, after brief stops there and in Portland, he arrived in Seattle on June 21.<sup>27</sup>

## XIV

# THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN

When Ernst Skarstedt returned to Seattle from New York, in June 1926, he was confronted with adjusting again to family life and establishing himself in some form of employment. He soon received an assignment on *Pacific-Tribune*, Seattle, which Mr. and Mrs. Hedberg published. This was not a happy arrangement. He resented the interference of the Hedbergs with what he considered his professional responsibilities. Their refusal to publish certain articles involving the Reverend Emil Friborg, pastor of the Swedish Baptist Church, and Svante Löfgren, both friends of Ernst Skarstedt, precipitated conflict. He resigned his position with the newspaper in November. There were some things in life that meant more to Ernst Skarstedt than steady employment under depressing circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

The absence of Ernst in New York for almost six years understandably produced some wedges of separation in the family. Although Ernst had sent modest sums of money to Ellen from New York, it was necessary for her to work to meet living expenses. She was employed at an hotel owned by Mrs. Rumin at a weekly wage of twelve dollars. Ernst complained that Ellen was critical of him on many occasions including his negligence in taking off his hat while they were riding in an elevator. The use of an elevator was an unusual experience for Ernst who normally walked the long stairways when it was necessary for him to visit someone in a high building. There were also good and cordial relations in the family when Vera and Walter,

her husband, came to visit or when a young man came to get Martha so that they could go out and have the rather novel experience of listening to a radio. In November Ernst had a bad experience as recorded in his diary: "Was run over by an automobile, fell down with my hands in my overcoat pockets, was not injured."<sup>2</sup>

Ernst's restlessness was great in spite of his association with old Seattle and Tacoma friends, involving the usual rounds of drinks, sprightly conversation, and playing violin duets. However, Puget Sound had an irresistible appeal to him and as early as August 1926 he made plans to buy the Wycoff place at Friday Harbor, on San Juan Island, with a large house and five acres of land. When he told Ellen about the purchase, without apparently prior consultation, she declared that she would never go there, and when the attempt was made to show her a photo of the house, she declared that she was "disinterested." Ernst proceeded with his plans, and in October he paid down \$500 on the \$3,500 purchase price. This was a rather hurried transaction, Ernst never having been distinguished for his business acumen.<sup>3</sup>

Ernst's new property was located 300 steps from the beginning of the business district and 1,100 steps from the school house at Friday Harbor. Early in December Ellen helped Ernst as he packed nine boxes of books, a bookcase, a trunk, a suitcase, and his writing desk. She once again declared positively that she would not again live in the country. When Ernst arrived in Friday Harbor, he bought a stove, built seven bookshelves seven feet by nine and one-third feet, and equipped the rooms as best he could. His reason for buying the large house was explained in a letter to "M. Ld." of *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten* in November 1927. Ernst had hoped to rent all but two rooms to tourists but he found instead that he was alone with a half dozen empty rooms. The property included an abundance of berry bushes and fruit trees, but there was no demand for these products. Then he observed: "There is great loneliness. I have no one in the area with whom I associate. I could become ill and die without anyone discovering it. You are right in saying that my interest in music is a help to me and without my violin, it could be unbearable here."<sup>4</sup>

The lonely man had other problems as he confided to Reslow in April 1927: "It seems as if I will never have a fixed place of residence. I am now so old and I begin to feel apathetic and think

that life may just as well come to an end sooner or later." In addition, he declared that there were two factors lacking as expressed in the wish, "If I only had a small house, but best of all, if my wife would live here. But one cannot have everything the way one wants it and there is no gain of any kind in philosophizing about life's adversities."<sup>5</sup>

Some occasions brought good cheer to Ernst. In April 1927 Svante Löfgren went to Friday Harbor to share with others in celebrating Ernst Skarstedt's seventieth birthday. As he came near Ernst's home he described the place where the veteran was spending his last years. What Löfgren saw he portrayed sensitively: "The sun is throwing its first golden beams over Mount Baker's glittering ice and snow. The deep forests on the lower sides of the mighty peak are still sleeping under a covering veil of silver-gray mist. They are far away and as silent as a dream. In the near distance, green islands are floating on a sea of blue. The incoming tide is washing the rocky shores and slowly drumming away in order to drown the noise of the sea gulls which are fighting over some clams they have found." As Löfgren walked slowly toward Skarstedt's house he observed, "Out on the green field, rolling toward the sand shores of the bay, every blade of grass and leaf of sweet clover is decorated with diamonds. A pair of Chinese pheasants are taking their morning walk on the soft and moist carpet, while a little humming bird . . . is happily feeding on the nectar of the sweet-smelling honeysuckle just outside the window." Soon, "a small man with kindly blue eyes and flowing silvery hair and beard," appeared to greet the visitor.<sup>6</sup>

Later that day as twilight came to enrich the mystic feeling, the two men sat in the book-lined room of the Skarstedt home. Ernst reminisced about the five decades since he first came to America. Many dear friends had passed on. There was a blending of sad and pleasant memories. Then Svante Löfgren wrote: "As a lonesome feeling crept over Ernst Skarstedt, and he wished he were no more a member of this earth, his tired eyes fell upon a pile of letters and telegrams that had arrived during the day. His eyes brightened once more as he read the greetings and well-wishes of friends scattered all over the country. All these little sheets of paper seemed to have souls. They were silent as the grave. Still, they spoke a language so very familiar." Then there was great silence. But the silence was



broken as Ernst Skarstedt picked up his violin, and as he played, his sensitive music blended with the spirit that brooded over the place as the shadows lengthened. It seemed as if the stormy voyage of Ernst Skarstedt's life was coming into a calm port.<sup>7</sup>

Ernst made occasional visits to Seattle during his last two years at Friday Harbor. He was there for a few days in June 1927 visiting the David Brattstroms, Dr. Will Lovering and others. He met Ellen, as planned, one day at the *Times* building. In January of the following year, he was in Seattle for two weeks visiting his family and friends. He was with Ellen on several occasions. He spent much of the time with Svante Löfgren who became his closest friend during the last years of his life. When in Seattle on this trip, he called on C. J. Smith, an attorney, on January 27, and asked him to read his last will and testament. After Smith had read the document he turned to Ernst and said: "Yes, I think it will hold good. You are a good lawyer."<sup>8</sup>

When Ernst returned to Friday Harbor after an absence of two weeks, he picked up his mail at the post office and found there twenty-one letters, forty-two newspapers, and three book packages. He enjoyed reading the letters from old friends. There wasn't much for him to do except to read, play the violin, and write an occasional article during the drab and cold winter days. But the mail did not always bring joy to the tired and aging man who lived by himself. When he read a letter from Ellen one day in February, he had bad news: "Saturday. Went to the post office. Letter from Ellen that Martha has tuberculosis. Must leave her place and go to the sanitarium at Colfax, California. Almost went out of my mind with sorrow." When a letter came from Martha a few days later, indicating that she was feeling better, his anxiety was somewhat relieved.<sup>9</sup>

The winter passed slowly, but in the latter part of March Ernst's diary records that he started on a project that engaged his attention and time unreservedly for the next three months. Late in March he wrote in his diary: "T. [Tuesday] 47°. Storm during the night and a bad storm today. Worked today like yesterday for three hours in preparation of a new edition of the volume, *Våra pennfåktare*. Went to Beaches in the evening and played violin duets with Mrs. Beach until 9 P.M." The succeeding entries until June 17, with only a rare exception, have a striking similarity: "Worked 10 hours on the

book," "Worked 9 hours on the book." Everything was subordinated to revising and enlarging the excellent anthology and biographical study of Swedish American writers which had been published in 1897, and had received wide acclaim in the United States and Sweden.<sup>10</sup>

The splendor of June days in Puget Sound brought Ernst out-of-doors again when he rejoiced in the great renewal of nature. Flowers bloomed with their great fragrance, birds sang lustily and joyfully from the nearby trees, and fruit was forming after the flowering of the trees. In the latter part of June, Ernst was thrilled by a visit from Marcus who spent several days at Friday Harbor. In the late afternoons and evenings they played violin duets. The cherries and loganberries were in full season so father and son picked the luscious fruit. However, Ernst did not feel well, complaining of dizziness. In July as Skarstedt gazed at night in the clear sky, a habit which had become increasingly enticing, he watched with the enthusiasm of a boy, the brilliant display of the northern lights, reminding him perhaps of the time long ago when he watched the same sky in a faraway land. When the currants and loganberries were at their best, Ernst sent carefully picked boxes of the delicious produce to Ellen in Seattle.<sup>11</sup>

In August Ernst went again on the *Mohawk* to Seattle where he was a guest of the Löfgrens, Dr. Will Lövering, and other friends. Ellen and Ernst were together much of the time when Ellen was not working. Friends took Ernst for automobile rides to Lake Stevens and other points of interest. In eight days Ernst gained six and one-half pounds. He felt poorly only once, but after he drank a toddy he felt much better.<sup>12</sup>

When Ernst returned to Friday Harbor for the last time in the middle of August, he stopped at the post office to pick up twenty-eight letters, forty newspapers, and a book package. He picked a large box of the finest berries which he sent to Ellen. After a brief lull of inactivity, his diary records that he returned to the revision of the manuscript for the new edition of *Våra pennfåktare*. From that time on until the end of November, he worked normally eight to nine hours each day, and occasionally twelve hours on the manuscript. It seemed as if he felt he might be living on borrowed time as he worked feverishly to complete this major literary task.

The only interruption, a pleasant one, occurred when Ellen came for a visit in the latter part of September. Ernst recorded in his diary: "Ellen is thrilled with the place."<sup>13</sup>

The gray days of November, when even nature seemed to be unkind, were difficult days. He had been working intently for almost five months in revising the manuscript, so he attributed his tiredness to overwork. The walks around his place became shorter and he found that it was easy to sleep in the afternoons. On election day in November, he voted at the courthouse for the Democratic candidates with three exceptions. He worked briefly at times but with difficulty on his manuscript which was virtually finished. His appetite was not good. On November 13 he felt poorly and vomited. He was terribly weak. Two neighbors, Lindberg and Dightman, came to call on him, and in a short time they returned with food and a supply of bouillon cubes.<sup>14</sup>

Ernst's neighbors became alarmed after a few days since Ernst did not regain his strength. Dr. Capron came from Friday Harbor and gave him some pills. Ernst's condition worsened as November moved on. In the middle of December he began to have pain in his stomach and back day and night. He ate only oranges. The last entry in his diary was for December 18, 1928: "Went through my manuscript for an hour. My left foot and leg are swollen and even my right foot is swollen."<sup>15</sup>

Ernst was now more than the proverbial three score and ten years although the calendar had never been an adequate measure of his life and thought. Family and friends realized that Ernst, who loved the solitariness afforded by Friday Harbor and San Juan Island, must now abandon it. He moved then to 331 Fourth Avenue, Seattle, where he received the affectionate care of his wife and the comfort that came from the visits of his children and friends.

Svante Löfgren was a regular visitor to the sick room of Ernst Skarstedt. He went one day to Ernst's home on San Juan Island, and brought back a trunk filled with books, paintings, clippings, and music that Ernst wanted at his sick bed. When Löfgren came for a visit a few days before his friend's death, he stopped outside the door of the sick room to listen as Ernst played the violin. Löfgren was happy since he thought Ernst was feeling better but found instead that he was worse. His friend, however, had crawled up on the edge

of the bed, mustering enough strength to gain the consolation which came from playing his violin.<sup>16</sup>

Ernst's habit of sustained activity and work continued almost until his dying day. Adolph Liljegren wrote to Ernst in December 1928 suggesting that he translate some poems for a Christmas annual, *Kring Krubban*, which would be published a year hence. After requesting more time, Ernst sent the translated poems and wrote to Liljegren on February 17, less than a month before his death: "I wish to add a greeting from my sick bed. I do not know what will happen to me, but it may be that I will recover. Mr. L. [Svante Löfgren] has been kind and has done me the service to copy the dictation. I could scarcely read what I wrote let alone make a clean copy."<sup>17</sup>

When the shadows lengthen and life comes near its end, the full meaning of the future is known only to those whose silence cannot be penetrated. But there is the sacredness of that quiet time when the years pass in review. Ernst Skarstedt, in the midst of agonizing pain caused by advanced cancer, reflected on the past. On March 4 he expressed his feelings in a letter to the Reverend Philip Andreen: "Through the hand of my wife I am sending these lines, truly the last that you will receive from me. I lie completely helpless and wait for the separation. I have suffered tremendous pains and I hope that they will soon be surmounted. I think each day about the possibility of again meeting our old friend, Pastor C. M. Esbjörn and others—that is a reassuring feeling in the hour of distress. Many dearest greetings." Pastor Esbjörn and Ernst Skarstedt had shared in an enduring friendship that was built upon abiding respect and consideration of the big questions about the meaning of life and destiny. A decisive aspect of that destiny, which is veiled from the full knowledge of mortal men, came at 10:30 P.M. on Wednesday, March 13, 1929, when Ernst Skarstedt passed into the silence of the great beyond.<sup>18</sup>

Fifty relatives and friends assembled at the Johnson and Hamilton Chapel in Seattle on Monday, March 18, to honor the memory of Ernst Skarstedt. Ebba Fredrickson played several numbers on the violin accompanied by Hattie Edenholtm. Mrs. C. H. Sutherland sang two Swedish songs. Pastor Emil Friborg, the liberal minister of the Swedish Baptist Church, conducted the service and

reviewed Ernst Skarstedt's life and career. Many bouquets of flowers from relatives, friends, publishers, and organizations filled a part of the chapel as a tribute to Ernst Skarstedt. What was mortal of this man who had loved life and shared it fully in his unique way was reduced to ashes in the crematory according to his request. His spirit continued on, and the temple of memory, through the accumulated resources of remembrances and history, is furnished with a portrait of varying degrees of clarity that abides across the years.<sup>19</sup>

## XV

# THE SUMMING UP

A variety of elements combined to share in the fashioning of Ernst Skarstedt whose life-span covered the proverbial threescore years and ten. The charming university town of Lund in Sweden, the austerity of existence as a seaman on a voyage to the Arctic Ocean and in Mezen on the White Sea, the struggle for identity in a pioneer Swedish community on the plains of Kansas, the hectic years in the journalistic world of Chicago, had been a part of his varied life by the time he had reached his early twenties. But he was restless, far more restless than most young men, and with the hearty support of Anna, his beloved wife, he sought and found freedom, if not contentment, in the virgin forest of Washington Territory. Although life was austere, it seemed good until as he described it, "the moon of adversity shone upon us" with the death of Anna after only seven years of married life. He had more questions than answers until as a journalist in San Francisco, he found satisfaction in his work and a companion in Ellen Högberg.

The vagabond quality of life in Skarstedt caused him to leave San Francisco and to seek the peace that might be possible in the life of a farmer, but the quest for peace was not achieved in the forest of Cowlitz County, Washington, nor on the parched earth near Laton, California. The urge to explore new horizons brought him to San Francisco again, and then to Seattle and the archipelago of Puget Sound, where the Skarstedts lived on Orcas and San Juan

Islands. Restless Ernst Skarstedt found no rest, and to heighten the contrast, he lived for six years toward the end of his life in crowded New York City. He then returned to live out the last years on his beloved Puget Sound.

The vagabond pattern of residency influenced the life and destiny of Ernst Skarstedt. His journal itemizes almost ninety addresses where he lived for longer or shorter periods. There was great variety in geography as well as in the world of work. He met new people who became his friends, joining a wide circle numbering regularly fifty with whom he carried on active correspondence. But there was no sense of belonging, that is, if a sense of belonging means striking roots deep in one place. Life had about it a persistent tentativeness and gnawing uncertainty.

Ernst's own family life brought meaningful resources to him. Deep and abiding love of youthful years between Anna Hult, his first wife, and Ernst, constitutes a memorable aspect of his life. The quality and intensity of that love and companionship made its invasion by death a near calamity. Death is always the great "interrupter" and for Ernst, the loss of his mother and Anna had been critical. Anna was young and full of adoration for Ernst. Although she could not stand up to him as Ellen later was able to do, Anna's influence was important. She changed his erratic conduct of early bachelor years in Chicago to a life of more order and decency. It is difficult to exaggerate the quiet influence of Anna upon Ernst's career.

Ellen was a different type of person from youthful Anna. She was more mature and experienced. Ernst was challenged by the independent spirit of Ellen who was far more realistic than he in family and related matters. There were uneven places at times when strong wills clashed, but Ellen knew what she wanted and why she wanted it. She loved Ernst and was proud of him. Her patience at times seemed to be limitless. Ernst, with his haphazard view of life and events, profited greatly from the affection and firmness of Ellen. Svante Löfgren, Ernst's closest friend in later years, quotes the latter as saying on several occasions, "In both my marriages I had the great good fortune to have a wife who was exactly suitable for me. My family life was consequently happy."<sup>1</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt was not endowed with great distinction in his

physical being, at least as judged by some standards, but an evaluation of that kind is at best not really meaningful. No stalwart Viking type, he was a short man, five feet seven inches at most, and of average weight. Contemporaries describe his blue eyes and fair complexion. Almost all observers refer to his long hair and full beard even in early adult years. In 1911 he wrote to his friend Vilhelm Reslow that he cut his hair only twice each year, and when he did so in winter months it often resulted in a severe cold settling in his back. His tonsorial appearance was temporarily changed in 1926, when he was returning by boat from New York. Ernst fell asleep in the barber's chair, and either through misunderstanding, or through joyous opportunity, the barber cut Ernst's hair and beard to normal length.<sup>2</sup>

Although Ernst Skarstedt was often inconsiderate of his wife and children, family relations were generally happy and relaxed. Martha, the middle child of the second marriage, recalls her father's kindness and patience.<sup>3</sup> Since Ernst read long hours for Anna and Ellen, when they were ironing or sewing, one would have expected that he would read or tell stories to his children. He did not do so, but interest in his children took another form. There was the ever-present slate with its wooden frame laced with red yarn. When the slate was brought to Ernst, he would divide it into nine squares. In each square, he drew a picture or a cartoon and he accompanied the drawings with a running commentary of simple explanation. Perhaps the figure was that of a man, smoking a pipe at a jaunty angle, with curling puffs of smoke filling the square, or a man with a sharp nose, a large curved mouth, and a protruding chin, or a witch on her broom, or a heavily-bearded man with a stove-pipe hat, or a fastidious sport with an oppressive high collar, or a friendly hobo with broad grin and carefree manner. The children applauded with great glee as the father plied his mystic art on the precious slate laced with red yarn. There were walks in the forests and fields, as Ernst pointed out beautiful flowers, the habitat of birds, or the antics of the farm animals. There was always a dog, although none was as loved as the one named Bird; there were tears as Martha and Mellie left him when they moved from Laton. During farm years there were always horses to be ridden, especially Jim, and father looked on with pride as daughters learned to gallop their horses while



riding bareback.

Although Ernst read and wrote for long hours in a room that was a part of a crowded small house, his control of the situation was remarkable. The children were not scolded when they interrupted him at his work and never, according to the evidence, did he say, "Don't bother me now." Martha recalls her father's response when she would approach him as he sat writing at his desk. The pipe in his left hand was put down. There she stood, cuddled up against him, embraced by his left arm, while the right hand was busily occupied with the manuscript before him. No words were spoken. In the stillness there was love and affection. Martha was not told to leave, but when some alternative attracted her, she slipped under her father's arm and left the room. There were times, too, when the daughters had fun combing Papa's long hair and beard or climbing on his shoulders to be carried around the room.

There were other occasions when father and daughters shared good times together. These occasions were a part of Swedish folk-lore brought by the immigrants to the New World. The fun associated with *Rida*, *rida*, *ranka* involved a lively experience. The daughter sat astride her father's right foot which was crossed over the left knee. In a rhythmic up and down motion, the child, figuratively speaking, rode a horse, accompanied by the singing of the words which describe a journey of a suitor to visit Margreta, a little maid. There were other folk tunes like Bellman's *Gubben Noak*, in which old and famous Noah was the center of attention.

Although the Ernst Skarstedt family was spared the outbursts of ill-temper which often are heaped upon the children of men at times, they were subjected quite often to the puzzling and disturbing silence of a father who for several days said not a word to members of the family. What caused these voids must have been very trying at times to mother and children. Apparently they were viewed as the normal conduct of husband and father, and quietly endured. When the silence and the dark mood came to an end, there were brighter days which helped make up for the earlier gloomy period.

Although certain aspects of the life of Ernst Skarstedt show lack of discipline and orderliness, other habits provide a striking contrast. His explanation is quite clear: "I have a regular passion to record everything possible, so that I seldom or never need to depend

on memory. . . . It is a mania with me to want everything to be correct."<sup>4</sup> The data recorded by Ernst is overwhelming. When he chopped wood, he counted the number of pieces; when he plowed the good earth, he tallied each furrow and computed the distance walked in miles; when he rowed a boat, he listed the number of strokes of the oars. He wrote confidently: "I can state almost exactly how many miles I have covered on foot, horseback, in a wagon, on boats and trains, how many letters I have written and received, how many gallons I have received from milking cows, how many pounds of butter my wife has churned, how many cows, horses, hogs, chickens I have owned, how many photographs I have developed, yes, even how many drinks I have consumed."<sup>5</sup>

The details in several areas were maintained daily and computed annually in his three journals. The record is an imposing one. In the years 1859-1928, he recorded 2,962 specific trips with place, date, mileage, and means of transportation, for a total of 211,943 miles. This travel was distributed as follows: railroad and boat, 175,056 miles; horse and buggy (and automobiles, a limited amount), 19,599 miles; horseback, 3,145 miles; on foot, 14,143 miles. He received 14,338 letters and he wrote 15,270 letters between 1871-1927. The number of regular correspondents often averaged more than fifty. In 1910, the number was eighty. His attendance at church services between 1871-1921 was 700 with 392 belonging to the seven youthful years before emigrating to the United States. He recorded attendance at 2,108 lectures, plays, and concerts between 1868-1927. The journals identify 4,541 newspaper and periodical articles and books published between 1879-1927. Ernst identified by name, date of birth, and age, the date and place of death, and occasionally the cause of death, of 631 friends and acquaintances. He provided a description of 2,017 photographs taken by him between 1887 and 1927, and 333 photographs are listed of him individually or as a member of a group. He noted many hundreds of occasions when he participated in musical activities as an instrumentalist or vocalist in solo or ensemble roles.<sup>6</sup>

The amazing extent of record keeping might mistakenly suggest that Ernst Skarstedt was a dull man who lacked resources of thought and ideas and found escape in counting and numbers. This would be a false appraisal of this unique and interesting person, because his

mind was occupied with many issues and the quest for answers. For instance, in pondering the life of man as a solitary individual in contrast with his role as a member of society, he lamented the fact that "most people fear nothing so much as to be alone. It is as if they are afraid of the dark as soon as they are alone. In order to feel satisfied, they must have someone to talk with or find themselves in a crowd of people on the street or in a theater. The need for constant companionship is one of the most reliable proofs of inner emptiness, spiritual weakness, and superficiality." In contrast, he observed: "The thinking and intelligent man needs much time for self-analysis and quiet contemplation, and the pleasure that a lover of books or a scholar experiences in solitariness is indescribably exciting." However, he continued: "This is not to say that continuous solitariness is the goal to be striven for, since anything in excess is to be condemned. Books and one's own company are not enough for all around development. Only in association with others are the rough edges smoothed and character formed, and only in sharing life with those who know more than you and have had greater experience does one learn humility and abandon excessive self esteem."<sup>7</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's life has many of the qualities that are typical of Henry David Thoreau, and it is not surprising that Skarstedt expressed formally his admiration for the Walden philosopher. The first essay of six studies in Skarstedt's volume *Amerikanska typer och karaktärer* (1919), (American Types and Characters), recounts main aspects of the thought of Thoreau and presents an enthusiastic endorsement of his ideas. Skarstedt, like Thoreau, loved nature and the simple life. It is understandable that he found deep meaning in Thoreau's "gospel of simplicity," which he pointed out "began as a philosophical ideal and became an art of living. . . ." Skarstedt cited enthusiastically Robert Louis Stevenson's observation that Thoreau had "made his little cabin by the side of Walden pond, a station along mankind's railroad from slavery to freedom." Ernst Skarstedt, a unique and free spirit, who had developed across the years his own distinctive way of life, believed that Thoreau's *Walden* "with its many thought-provoking truths can never be read too often nor reflected on too seriously, and it should be found in every home, where it should be elevated to the rank of a family Bible, since it is the messenger of salvation to everyone who seeks freedom."<sup>8</sup>

The life of Ernst Skarstedt was characterized by change; the score that he played had different themes and tempos. This variegated pattern was not only a fact in his experience of life, but his intimate philosophy gave recognition to it. He believed that, "We need both day and night, both summer and at least some winter, both joy and sorrow, both victory and defeat, both good and bad fortune, in order that life should not lose its charm and through monotony tire out too soon. All of life is a chain of change and the more this is true, the more exciting and interesting it becomes. It would be unbearable if we were condemned to pass our time in unchanging monotony." As he viewed life, he found that there is nothing that cannot be used so that it becomes a burden, or that it becomes a joy or blessing. Moreover, he observed that, "We all have the experience in life of both shadow and light and it is our duty to become accustomed to both and to study them so as not to attach ourselves too much to one or the other of them."<sup>9</sup>

Although Skarstedt suggested the vital role of choice and decision, there was an undercurrent of determinism in his view of life. After studying the works of Francis Galton and others, he concluded, "It is irrefutable that the laws of heredity set specific limits to every being's ability and talent. Even if one can move along quite far in various areas of activity through wisely planned efforts, he will sooner or later reach a limitation he cannot possibly overcome. . . . There is for everyone an hereditary limitation that cannot be surmounted."<sup>10</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt was a severe critic of the historic and contemporary church, but his criticism distinguished between the actual and the ideal. The church carried too much "deadweight" in the form of "false and irrational doctrines." As a result of this "ballast" and under its influence, people became narrow-minded and lost perspective. The gap between profession and practice was wide. The results were consequently serious: "Do I find Christians more honest and conscientious, more simple and humble, more good-hearted and helpful than those outside the church? Not at all. In far too many cases I have found the complete opposite to be true."<sup>11</sup>

In contrast with the church and the attitude of many of its members, Skarstedt wrote beautifully and sensitively about the Nazarene, the Master, "the representative of the simple life." It was

the master who "asked if life was not more than food and the body more than raiment." But those who claim to be followers of Him "are in dress and manner, in deeds and action, just as vain, just as superficial, just as full of ostentation as if they had never heard the Master's life history and had never listened to a sermon about him." Moreover, as Skarstedt sat in church he reported, "It always seems to me that the Nazarene would not feel at home among the fashion plates and snobs and that the latter would not tolerate him." There was a solution according to Skarstedt: "Cast overboard the ballast of the old-fashioned and irrational doctrines and train the members of the church in a more valid gospel—the gospel of simplicity and brotherhood."<sup>12</sup>

The literary and journalistic career of Ernst Skarstedt over five decades produced a great volume of materials. He was responsible for seventeen books, as author (13), editor (2), and translator (2). Approximately 4,500 of his essays, editorials, news stories, and book reviews appeared in periodicals and newspapers. He occasionally used the pseudonyms *Allvar* (earnest in Swedish) and *Liber* (free in Latin) and more frequently the signature, E. Sdt. Three full-length volumes—*Våra pennfåktare* (Our Writers), 1897, *Vagabond och redaktör* (Vagabond and Editor), 1914, and *Svensk-Amerikanska folket i helg och söcken* (Swedish Americans at Work and Play), 1917, are generally regarded as the most significant of his many books.

*Våra pennfåktare* is a 244-page, double-columned volume which provides biographical sketches and representative examples of the poetry of many of the 300 Swedish American authors listed. The volume attracted much attention in Sweden and in Swedish American circles. The reviewer in *Svenska Dagbladet* (Stockholm) observed that "Swedes, in their anxiety about emigration to USA, overlook the fact that there flowers over there a growing culture, which, while retaining its Swedish character, is a source of pride for both the old and new countries."<sup>13</sup> Otto E-r in *Göteborgs Aftonblad* wrote, "Ernst Skarstedt has succeeded in 'his labor of love' as he calls it. One cannot completely agree with the judgments that he expresses now and then but on the whole he shows praiseworthy conscientiousness and lack of partisanship." He also described Skarstedt as "a many-sided and gifted writer."<sup>14</sup> The Swedish American press was

generally enthusiastic in its praise. An exception was O. A. Linder in *Iduna* (Chicago) who wrote that it was of "uneven quality," although "instructive, interesting, and enjoyable."<sup>15</sup> A revised edition was published posthumously with the title *Pennfåktare* by Publicistklubben of Stockholm in 1930.

A unique autobiographical account of Ernst Skarstedt's first decade in America is presented in *Vagabond och redaktör*, a 400-page, well-illustrated volume. The book is fascinating reading not because of the elegance of the style but because of its varied and interesting contents. It was based upon the author's detailed diary. *Stockholms-Tidning*, after presenting a comprehensive account of the volume, praised it as enriching the resources of autobiographical accounts in the Swedish language, and commended it as "interesting and full of information," constituting "unadorned autobiography."<sup>16</sup> *Svenska Tribunen Nyheter* (Chicago) reviewed it with the lead sentence, "He who begins to read this book cannot quit until the last page is read," and commented later that, "Details which might seem tiresome and unimportant recorded by others are woven into an interesting and illuminating whole." *Svea* (Worcester). described the volume as "a great human document and a worthy piece of Swedish American cultural history."<sup>17</sup>

The most comprehensive study of Swedish American life, and quite likely the best account in one volume for understanding certain aspects of this subject, is found in Skarstedt's *Svensk-Amerikanska folket i helg och söcken*, a 450-page volume. The author painted, figuratively speaking, the portrait of the Swedish immigrant in great detail, and on a broad canvas. The coverage includes description of the homes and the daily life of the immigrants, church and educational activities, professional and personal life, organizations and cultural pursuits, press and literature, agriculture and industry, and the rather unique "Swedish American language." Chapters of special interest describe the life of immigrants among their American friends and neighbors, an extensive portrayal of unique types and characters, and collectors of books and objects of art.

Since *Svensk-Amerikanska folket* was written primarily for readers in Sweden, and published by Björck and Börjesson, Stockholm, several Swedish newspapers and periodicals published reviews. O. Lgn. in *Svenska Dagbladet* observed: "For a knowledge of

Swedish Americans and Swedish American conditions, Ernst Skarstedt's new book is the most inclusive and complete volume that has appeared. It is, moreover, well-written and the evaluations and judgments come from a keen mind that knows men and the world as they are." Skarstedt was also commended "for the salutary purity of the language by which he expressed himself following decades of residence in the United States."<sup>18</sup> E. Tog in *Svensk Tidskrift*, was critical of some aspects, but concluded that, "There still remains the impression of a high grade richly informative and pleasantly entertaining book, the most complete, the most vital, and the most experience-filled that we have of our people in North America."<sup>19</sup>

Professor George M. Stephenson, the distinguished scholar of Swedish immigration to America, wrote, "The work of Mr. Skarstedt is of such high order, the numerous illustrations so excellent, and the general make up of the book so satisfactory that one can find little incentive to look for flaws." Stephenson appraised the volume as "in many respects the most balanced and most sympathetic account of the Swedish Americans yet written. . . ." <sup>20</sup> The Swedish American press greeted the volume with a chorus of praise except for criticisms of certain aspects. For instance, O. A. Linder in *Svenska Amerikanaren* (Chicago) contended that the title was pretentious, based as it was upon August Strindberg's volume on the cultural history of Sweden. He argued that Strindberg's capacity for observation was great, while that of Skarstedt was limited by the latter's interests which were often too restricted.<sup>21</sup> E. W. Olson in *Ungdomsvännen* (Rock Island) criticized the book for its lack of emphasis upon developments in the eastern section of the United States.<sup>22</sup>

Histories of California, Oregon, and Washington with special emphasis upon the Swedish population were written by Skarstedt. Each well-illustrated volume contained approximately 300 biographical sketches of Swedish Americans. *Svenska Amerikanaren* identified the author's ability in this area by commenting on the volume about Washington: "In this special kind of literary work, Skarstedt stands unsurpassed because of his exactness, love of truth, his ability to take his readers to certain points, where they can view great distances, and then he leads them amidst these points without confusing them." <sup>23</sup> Three volumes of biographies of Americans were also published. Skarstedt's brief studies of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roose-

vult were well received. The United States Department of State printed a special edition of the former for distribution in Sweden. The Roosevelt biography was the first to be written originally in the Swedish language. Skarstedt's biographical studies in one volume of Henry David Thoreau, Theodore Brainard Terry, Harvey Whitefield, Artemus Ward (Charles Farrar Browne), Joaquin Miller, and Bayard (James) Taylor, brought interesting and generally unavailable material to Swedish readers.

Skarstedt wrote hundreds of poems in periodicals and newspapers. A collection of sixty-four were included in the volume *Under vestliga skyar* (Under Western Skies), 1907. Karl Hellberg recounts that he complimented the author on his talent as a writer of poetry, and received this reply: "Oh, Mr. Hellberg, I remain completely outside the boundaries of poetry." This was a realistic acknowledgment by Ernst Skarstedt that he was not in the first rank of poets in Swedish America.<sup>24</sup> An anthology of eighteen Swedish American poets together with brief biographical sketches was published by him in 1890 (*Svensk-Amerikanska poeter i ord och bild*).

Approximately 4,500 articles were written by Ernst Skarstedt in slightly more than 100 periodicals and newspapers in the United States and Sweden. *Vestkusten* (San Francisco) and *Nordstjernan* (New York) contained the largest number. Twenty-eight issues of *Valkyrian* (New York), the fine Swedish American monthly, carried sixteen articles of varied length and subject matter in the decade 1899-1909. Full-length articles by Skarstedt are found in almost every issue of *Prärieblomman* (Rock Island), 1902-1913, the well-known literary annual. He wrote the foreword to many books, including anthologies of poetry by Magnus Elmblad and Ninian Waerner.

The American odyssey of Ernst Skarstedt covered half a century except for two trips to Sweden. He was only twenty-one when he emigrated to the United States. Although he became fully Americanized in language and in understanding of American life and culture, he maintained close identity with the Swedish tradition and development. He became the foremost champion and interpreter of Swedish American culture. Several considerations contributed to Skarstedt's emphasis on Swedish and Swedish-American culture. As a journalist, he wrote for Swedish language newspapers and periodicals



in Sweden and the United States. All his books and almost all of his articles were written in the Swedish language. His circle of friends was almost exclusively Swedish. He had a deep and abiding appreciation for Swedish literature and history. Although he wrote well in English, his use of that language was limited largely to articles published in agricultural journals and to minor accounts in local newspapers.

Ernst Skarstedt wrote extensively about immigration. He saw a mutuality of advantage in immigration for Sweden and the United States. The exodus to America had been an important safety valve for Swedish population. He asked pertinent questions in 1917: "What would Sweden do with two million Swedes and their descendents who now live in the United States? Would there be work and food for them?" However, the nation that received the immigrants profited not only from the economic productivity of a greater work force, but other inherent advantages resulted. He described the implication for America in 1917, as follows:

It is through the addition of foreign ideas and suggestions that one-sidedness is precluded in the new nation's culture and development. A completely and finally-formed American people is not found and will not be found for a long time. The American people always incorporate from different nations new blood, new thoughts, and new ideals, which in America undergo a melting-pot process, and during the course of time, each national group struggles in its own manner in behalf of its own culture not less than for the welfare of the entire nation.<sup>25</sup>

Although contemporary evaluations of individuals must be judged in the background of many personal and related factors, some containing unfair hostility and others unwarranted praise, the emergence of a distinctive consensus lends validity to the portrait which other evidence has already sketched in basic outline. There is more than a consensus among Skarstedt's contemporaries as to the unique traits of the man; there is decisive unanimity. Alex Olsson, who knew Ernst Skarstedt well, has written: "Skarstedt was an individualist. Personal freedom was dearer to him than anything else and he hated with the heartiest feeling all humbug, affectation, and duplicity. He was quite conservative in some aspects but radical when it came to uprooting old customs and dogmas of sophistry."<sup>26</sup> Oliver A. Linder, who also knew Skarstedt intimately, wrote, "Ernst

Skarstedt is not one who has a private and also an official opinion. No one who knows him distrusts him. . . . He is an unusually honest person. He has attacked like one who attacks an enemy but he has never been insulting. Derision is a completely foreign element with Skarstedt; instead of it, indignation is found." Linder, using the pseudonym "Olavus," emphasized that, "Skarstedt did not understand compromise. It could turn into a kind of stubbornness, but as a newspaper man, it can be said about him that he saved his soul."<sup>27</sup>

More significant than the testimony of contemporaries is Ernst Skarstedt's response to it and the evidence of the man himself. When Theodore Hessel (Farbror von Slokum), Swedish American journalist, wrote about Skarstedt, accusing him of being "strange and eccentric and having bizarre views about the life of a hermit and the corruption of civilization," Ernst did not disagree. Moreover, when Per Lärke, (Pelle Fogelin), a journalist in Sweden and America, observed that Skarstedt was "a queer fellow, full of a lot of eccentric ideas, but also a man with his heart in the right place," there was no objection from Skarstedt.<sup>28</sup>

In the context of the above statements, Skarstedt replied in a unique commentary describing himself by using the third person. He emphasized that, "His eccentric ideas consist principally in that he loved solitude and freedom and will detest until death everything that is called propriety and etiquette, and all snobbery and extravagance of civilization." He opposed all kinds of tyranny, not only that of sea captains and others who are guilty of bullying subordinates, but he also opposed "the refined kind of tyranny, which under the name of socialism, temperance reform, and the like, seek with overpowering words to reshape people according to certain bigoted and narrow-minded patterns." Skarstedt was especially critical of "these small-minded reformers . . . who brag about liberal-mindedness, but who are, in his eyes, collectively and individually, either humbugs or fools." Then he described what he meant by liberal-minded: "One who within his heart is a friend of man; one who is independent and gives reasons for what he asserts, but grants equally to his neighbor the right to think and believe in his own way, and concedes, too, that the other person may be right; one who will never press his belief on others, but allows tolerance to dwell in his heart."<sup>29</sup>

Ernst Skarstedt's life had many interesting chapters. The school boy at Lund dreamed of faraway places, and he lived out his years under the western skies of faraway America. The young seaman made possible freedom for three Czarist political prisoners whom he met in a Russian port on the White Sea; he continued through the years to seek for the minds of men, freedom from social, political, and religious tyranny. He was a Swedish immigrant, writing almost exclusively in the language of his mother tongue, but he was a keen and sensitive student of American life and thought. There is a feeling of great regret in a succeeding generation that his unique and creative genius did not have a larger arena in American life.

The perspective of a later generation, verified also by Ernst Skarstedt's contemporaries, views him as an eccentric, and that, properly understood, is a compliment. Some may lament, and others may applaud his nonconformity, a nonconformity that was a natural and a genuine reaction to stifling, repressive conformity. It is appropriate to say about Ernst Skarstedt, in the words he quoted from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer."<sup>30</sup>

## NOTES

### I. The Early Years

1. *Svensk Släktkalender 1913* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1912), p. 960.
2. *Svensk Släktkalender 1911*, p. 750.
3. Mrs. C. W. Skarstedt to Harald Wieselgren, Jan. 20, 1859; "Dagbok av Hedvig Skarstedt," Feb. 28, Apr. 4, May 7, Oct. 6, 1859; Mrs. C. W. Skarstedt to Mary Lindberg, Mar. 17, 1859.
4. Mrs. C. W. Skarstedt to Mary Lindberg, Mar. 16, 1859 and Nov. 15, 1859; "Dagbok av Hedvig Skarstedt," Nov. 13, 1859.
5. "Dagbok av Hedvig Skarstedt," Nov. 13, 1859.
6. *Ibid.*, Nov. 14, 1859.
7. Mrs. C. W. Skarstedt to Mary Lindberg, Nov. 15, 1859.
8. "Dagbok av Ernst Skarstedt," Dec. 28, 1863 (hereafter cited as "Dagbok").
9. *Ibid.*, Aug. 12, 1864; Ernst Skarstedt, "Ett varnande exempel," *Iduna* (Chicago), Feb. 5, 1898.
10. "Dagbok," Nov. 28, 1865.
11. "Conrad Skarstedt på 70-årsdagen den 19 Augusti, 1928," (Falun: Falu-Kurirens tryckeri, 1928), p. 31; Ernst Skarstedt to Dr. Peter Wieselgren, Dec. 27, 1867.
12. "Dagbok," Jan. 31, 1866.
13. Ernst Skarstedt, "Sjömans-Lif. Verklighetsbilder," *Valkyrian, IV* (1900), 219-20 (hereafter cited as "Sjömans-Lif").
14. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
15. "Journal av Ernst Skarstedt," *III*, 20-23 (hereafter cited as "Journal").
16. *Ibid.*, *III*, 26, 29.
17. "Dagbok," June 18-29, 1868.
18. *Ibid.*, Apr. 26, 1869.
19. *Ibid.*, Jan. 20, 1871; June 4, July 1, Aug. 1, Sept. 13, 1869; Jan. 14-20, 1871.
20. *Ibid.*, June 25-July 9, 1872.
21. *Ibid.*, Mar. 18, 25, 26, Dec. 1, 1872.
22. *Ibid.*, Sept. 28, 1873.
23. "Anteckningar för Pastor Humbla av Ernst Skarstedt, Lund 1872 och 1873," pp. 1, 14-15, "Dagbok," Apr. 9, 11, 1873.
24. "Dagbok," Jan. 2, Aug. 3, 31, Sept. 12, 1874.
25. *Ibid.*, Sept. 3, Oct. 15, 1874; Jan. 4, 1875.

26. *Ibid.*, Jan. 14-16, Feb. 3, 1875.
27. *Ibid.*, Feb. 20, May 27, 1871; Jan. 2, 1874.
28. *Ibid.*, Feb. 8, 14, 17, 1875.
29. *Ibid.*, Feb. 19, 21, Mar. 5-6, 1875.
30. *Ibid.*, Mar. 9, 12, 1875.
31. *Ibid.*, Mar. 15-16, 31, 1875.
32. *Ibid.*, Apr. 2, 1875.
33. *Ibid.*, Apr. 10, 1875.
34. *Ibid.*, Apr. 11-13, 1875.

## II. Life as a Seaman

1. "Dagbok," Apr. 13, 1875; "Sjömans-Lif," p. 221.
2. "Sjömans-Lif," p. 222.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
4. "Dagbok," June 15, 1875; "Sjömans-Lif," pp. 301-2.
5. "Sjömans-Lif," p. 302.
6. "Dagbok," June 4, 1875; "Sjömans-Lif," p. 304.
7. "Dagbok," June 4, 1875; "Sjömans-Lif," pp. 304-5.
8. "Dagbok," June 4, 1875; "Sjömans-Lif," pp. 305-6.
9. "Sjömans-Lif," pp. 303-4.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 351-52.
11. "Dagbok," July 15, 1875; "Sjömans-Lif," p. 352.
12. "Sjömans-Lif," pp. 352-53.
13. *Ibid.*
14. "Dagbok," July 18, 21, 1875.
15. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1875.
16. *Ibid.*, July 23, 1875.
17. *Ibid.*, Aug. 5, 7, 1875.
18. "Sjömans-Lif," pp. 355-56.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 414-15.
20. "Dagbok," Aug. 12, 1875.
21. "Sjömans-Lif," pp. 416-18; "Dagbok," Aug. 14, 17, 20, 29, 1875.

22. "Sjömans-Lif," p. 460.
23. "Dagbok," Sept. 23-24, 1875.
24. "Sjömans-Lif," p. 461; "Dagbok," Sept. 25, 1875.
25. "Sjömans-Lif," pp. 519-20.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 578.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 645-47; "Dagbok," Nov. 10, 1875.

### III. School Years at Lund

1. "Dagbok," Nov. 14-28, 1875, *passim*.
2. *Ibid.*, Dec. 13, 1875.
3. *Ibid.*, Jan. 7-18, 1876, *passim*.
4. *Ibid.*, Sept. 14, 1876.
5. *Ibid.*, Feb. 7, Mar. 13, June 5, 8, 1877.
6. *Ibid.*, Oct. 29, 1876, June 9, 1877.
7. *Ibid.*, Sept. 26, Dec. 10, 1876; Jan. 7, June 15, Aug. 1, 1877.
8. *Ibid.*, Oct. 19, 1876.
9. *Ibid.*, Sept. 23, Nov. 8-9, 1876; May 12, 1877.
10. "Varians," *II*, 246.
11. "Dagbok," May 28, 29, 1877; Ernst Skarstedt to Josua Lindahl, Feb. 18, 1878.
12. "Dagbok," June 2-9, 1877.
13. *Ibid.*, June 22, 1877.
14. *Ibid.*, July 1, 19, 1877.
15. *Ibid.*, Aug. 22, 1877.
16. *Ibid.*, Sept. 4-6, 17, 1877.
17. *Ibid.*, Jan. 21, 1878.
18. *Ibid.*, Sept. 16, 21, Oct. 10, Nov. 25, Dec. 23, 1877.
19. *Ibid.*, Feb. 9, 1878.
20. Ernst Skarstedt to C. W. Skarstedt, Apr. 15, 1878.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, Apr. 22, 1878.
23. *Ibid.*, Apr. 27, 1878; "Dagbok," Apr. 27, 1878.
24. "Dagbok," Apr. 29, May 3, 1878.

25. *Ibid.*, May 7-11, 1878.
26. *Ibid.*, May 1-17, 1878.
27. *Ibid.*, May 24, 27, 1878.
28. *Ibid.*, May-Aug., *passim*.
29. Ernst Skarstedt to C. W. Skarstedt, July 22, 1878.
30. Ernst Skarstedt to Count Carl Trampe, July 15, 1878; "Dagbok," Aug. 24, 28, 1878.
31. "Dagbok," Aug. 30-31, Sept. 1, 1878.
32. *Ibid.*, Oct. 14, 1878.
33. "Dagbok," Oct. 12, 1878; Ernst Skarstedt to C. W. Skarstedt, Oct. 13, 1878.
34. "Dagbok," Dec. 1, 1878.
35. *Ibid.*, Sept. 21-22, 27, Oct. 31, 1878.
36. Ernst Skarstedt to Lars Eric Nilsson, Oct. 27, 1878.
37. "Dagbok," Dec. 11-13, 1878.

#### IV. Emigration to America

1. "Dagbok," Dec. 18-29, 1878.
2. *Ibid.*, Dec. 29, 1878; Jan. 4, 1879.
3. Ernst Skarstedt, *Vagabond och redaktör* (Seattle: Washington Printing Co., 1914), p. 12, (hereafter cited as *Vagabond och redaktör*).
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
6. "Dagbok," Mar. 20-22, 1879; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 17-18; "Dagbok," Mar. 23, 1879.
7. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 22-23; "Dagbok," Apr. 26, 1879.
8. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 25; "Dagbok," Mar. 25, 1879.
9. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 25-26; "Dagbok," Apr. 1, 1879.
10. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 26-27.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31; "Dagbok," Apr. 5, 1879.
12. "Dagbok," Apr. 4, 1879.
13. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 32.
14. "Dagbok," Apr. 27, 1879.
15. *Ibid.*, May 25, 1879.

16. *Ibid.*, June 2, 1879; *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 34.
17. "Dagbok," June 16, 1879.
18. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 44-46.
19. "Dagbok," July 26, 1879.
20. *Ibid.*, Sept. 4, 1879.
21. *Ibid.*, Sept. 10, 1879.
22. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 46-47; "Dagbok," July 20, 24, 1879.
23. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 63.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
27. "Dagbok," Jan. 2, 1880.
28. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 69-71; "Dagbok," Jan. 20, 1880.
29. "Dagbok," Jan. 23, 1880.
30. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 77-78.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89; "Dagbok," Mar. 4-5, 1880.
35. "Journal," *III*, 32-33.
36. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 88-89; "Dagbok," Apr. 13, 15, 21, 1880.
37. "Dagbok," Apr. 5, 11-12, 1880.
38. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 95; "Dagbok," Apr. 29, 1880.
39. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 95-97; "Dagbok," Apr. 29-30, 1880.
40. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 97.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3; "Dagbok," May 1, 1880.
45. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 103-8.
46. "Journal," *III*, 33; "Dagbok," May 6-9, 14, 1880.
47. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 110-11; "Dagbok," May 25-June 2, 1880.
48. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 111-12.



## V. The Chicago Years

1. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 113-14.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-21; "Dagbok," Sept. 23-27, 1880.
3. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 116.
4. *Augustana och Missionären* (Rock Island, Ill.), IV (Nov. 24, 1880), 740-42; *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 142.
5. "Dagbok," Aug. 17, 1880; *Svea* (Worcester, Mass.), Oct. 1, 1925.
6. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 128-32, 140.
7. "Dagbok," Dec. 8, 1878.
8. *Ibid.*, Dec. 10, 1878.
9. "Dagbok," June 28, July 23, 1881; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 160-61.
10. Ernst Skarstedt, *Vid hennes sida* (Portland, 1889), p. 12.
11. "Dagbok," July 24, 1881; *Vid hennes sida*, p. 12; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 166-67.
12. "Dagbok," Sept. 21-22, 1881.
13. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 173-79.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200, 206; *Vid hennes sida*, pp. 26-27; "Journal," II, 24.
15. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 157-59. The article, "Består svenska kungafamiljen av idioter," appeared in *Svenska Amerikanaren* (Chicago), Mar. 15, 1884.
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17. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 211-14.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
20. *Svenska Amerikanaren*, Aug. 12, 1880, Mar. 25, 1884; *Svenska Tribunen*, Feb. 11, Mar. 4, 1885.

## VI. An Interlude

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2. "Dagbok," Mar. 18, 1885; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 242-44.
3. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 243-46.
4. "Dagbok," Mar. 21, 24, 1885; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 248-52.
5. "Dagbok," June 28, 1885; *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 255.
6. "Dagbok," June 29, 1885; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 255-56.

7. "Dagbok," July 9, 1885.
8. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 257-60.
9. "Dagbok," Sept. 3, 16, 1885; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 261-67.
10. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 261-62.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
12. "Dagbok," Oct. 8-26, 1885; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 271-73.
13. "Dagbok," Oct. 26-Nov. 11, 18-20, 1885; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 275-79, 283.
14. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 275.
15. Ernst Skarstedt to C. W. Skarstedt, Jan. 1, 1883; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 283-84.
16. "Dagbok," Nov. 27, 1885; *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 284; Ernst Skarstedt to C. W. Skarstedt, June 8, 1887.
17. "Dagbok," Nov. 28, 1885.
18. *Ibid.*, Dec. 5, 13, 1885; Ernst Skarstedt to Pastor B. Wadström, Dec. 13, 1885; Copy of letter in "Dagbok," Dec. 13, 1885.
19. "Dagbok," Dec. 24, Dec. 13, 1885.
20. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 291-93.
21. "Dagbok," Dec. 20, 1885 and April 7, 1886.
22. *Vid hennes sida*, pp. 75-76.
23. "Dagbok," Feb. 25, 1886 and December 17, 1885; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 297-98.
24. "Dagbok," Apr. 17, 7, 1886.
25. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 295-97.
26. "Dagbok," May 23, 27, 1886; *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 297.
27. "Dagbok," June 7, 1886; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 298-300.
28. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 286-89.
29. Ernst Skarstedt to *Prostinnan* Westdahl, Dec. 20, 1885.
30. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 291.
31. "Dagbok," June 8-9, 1886.

#### VII. A Moon of Adversity

1. "Dagbok," June 25-28, 1886; *Emigrationsutredningen. Bilaga V. Byggestatistik* (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt och Söner, 1910), p. 112.
2. "Dagbok," June 28, July 1, 3, 8, 1886.

3. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 306; "Journal," II, 4.
4. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 306, 308-10; "Journal," II, 4.
5. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 311, 320-22.
6. "Dagbok," Dec. 26, 1886.
7. *Ibid.*, Jan. 22, 1887.
8. *Ibid.*, Feb. 1-4, 11, 1887.
9. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 323-34.
10. "Dagbok," Feb. 28, 1887 and Mar. 26, 1887.
11. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 326-29.
12. "Dagbok," May 13-16, 1886; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 331-32.
13. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 332-33.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 334-35.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 337-40.
16. "Dagbok," Oct. 30, 1887 and Mar. 11, 1888; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 346-48.
17. "Dagbok," Feb. 22, 1888; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 342-43, 349-50.
18. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 351-52.
19. "Dagbok," Mar. 13, 1888; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 355, 357.
20. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 364, 367.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 371-72.
23. "Dagbok," Aug. 11, 19, 25, 1888; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 372-74.
24. "Dagbok," Sept. 17, 27, 1888; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 375-76.
25. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 376.
26. "Dagbok," Sept. 28, 1888; *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 377.
27. *Vagabond och redaktör*, p. 377.

#### VIII. The Quest for Answers

1. "Dagbok," Sept. 29, Oct. 7, 30, 1888.
2. *Ibid.*, Nov. 11, 13, 1888.
3. *Ibid.*, Oct. 28, Nov. 5, 1888; *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 380-82.
4. "Dagbok," Oct. 31, 1888.
5. *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 386-404.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 404-8.
7. *Vid hennes sida*, p. 151.
8. "Dagbok," June 11-16, 1889; "Journal," *II*, 38.
9. *Enskilda Skrifter af A. A. Swärd* (San Francisco, 1895), pp. 6, 15.
10. "Dagbok," Aug. 28, 1891.
11. *Ibid.*, Jan. 7, 1894.
12. *Ibid.*, Oct. 4, 1891.
13. *Ibid.*, Dec. 31, 1891.
14. *Ibid.*, Jan. 26, May 4, 1892; Apr. 14, May 4, 22, 1893.
15. *Ibid.*, June 5, Aug. 2, Nov. 27, 1892; Mar. 31, 1893.
16. *Ibid.*, June 2, Feb. 22, June 23, 26, 1893.
17. *Ibid.*, June 27-28, 1893.
18. *Ibid.*, July 14, 23, Oct. 7, 1893.
19. *Ibid.*, Oct. 22, 1893.
20. *Ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1893.
21. *Ibid.*, Oct. 26, Nov. 22, Dec. 2, 1894.
22. *Ibid.*, Jan. 17, May 26, 1895.
23. *Ibid.*, Mar. 9-10, 1896.
24. *Ibid.*, Nov. 29, 1895 and Jan. 6, 1896.
25. "Journal," *I*, 11-29.
26. *Vestkusten* (San Francisco), Nov. 4, 1892.
27. *Ibid.*, Jan. 24, 1895.
28. *Ibid.*, Aug. 16, 1894.
29. *Ibid.*, Apr. 25, 1895.
30. *Ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1894 and Jan. 3, 1895.
31. "Journal," *II*, 208-23.
32. "Journal," *III*, 39-50.
33. "Journal," *II*, 171-75.
34. "Dagbok," Mar. 6, 8, Oct. 26, 1896.

#### IX. Farm and City

1. Ernst Skarstedt to Helge Sandburg, printed in *Iduna* (Stockholm), July 6, 1901, p. 12, *Orange Judd Farmer*, Jan. 13, 1900.

2. "Dagbok," Apr. and May, *passim*, Dec. 31, 1901.
3. *Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 11, 1899.
4. *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, Apr. 29, 1899.
5. "Journal," *I*, 29.
6. *Ibid.*, 30-34.
7. "Dagbok," Dec. 31, 1900 and Dec. 31, 1901.
8. *Portland Evening Telegram*, July 20, 1901.
9. *Ibid.*
10. "Dagbok," Feb. 1, 1901; "Journal," *II*, 46-60.
11. "Journal," *III*, 50-60.
12. "Dagbok," Oct. 13, Dec. 19, 1901; Feb. 25-28, Mar. 5-6, 1902; "Journal," *II*, 4.
13. "Dagbok," Aug. 5, 1902; Mar. 12, 1903; June 25-July 4, 1902; "Journal," *II*, 4.
14. *Allsvensk Samling* (Göteborg), Oct. 29, 1929, p. 9; "Dagbok," Aug. 28, 1902.
15. "Journal," *III*, 25.
16. "Dagbok," Mar. 17-Apr. 7, 1903; "Journal," *II*, 4.
17. "Dagbok," Apr. 14-15, May 19, July 27, Aug. 22, 1903.
18. *Ibid.*, Jan. 16, and May 5, 1904.
19. *Ibid.*, May 7, June 13, 17, 1904.
20. *Ibid.*, Aug. 4, June 14, Jan. 13, 1904; Feb. 22, 1905.
21. *Ibid.*, Aug. 13, 1904; June 14, 1903; Jan. 13, 1904.
22. A copy of the letter is found in the "Dagbok," May 12, 1905.
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24. "Journal," *I*, 40-55.
25. *Vestkusten*, July 23, 1903.
26. *Svenska Verlden* (Chicago), Feb. 2, 1905.
27. *Nordstjernan* (New York), Jan 19, 1905; *Vestkusten*, Mar. 15, 1906.
28. *Nordstjernan*, May 12, 1904.
29. *Väktaren* (Seattle), May 17, 1905.
30. *Nordstjernan*, June 29, 1905; *Dictionary of American Biography*, *VI*, 464-65.
31. *Nordstjernan*, Aug. 11, 1904.
32. *Vestkusten*, Apr. 5, 1906.

33. *Nordstjernan*, Oct. 25, 1906 and June 13, 1907.
34. *Ibid.*, Apr. 5, 1906.
35. "Dagbok," Apr. 1, Aug. 18, Nov. 17, 1905; Jan. 11, 1906; *Practical Farmer*, Jan. 4, 1913.
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37. "Journal," *II*, 4-5.
38. Ernst Skarstedt, "*Skräckdagarna i San Francisco*," *Prärieblomman Kalender för 1907*, pp. 124-27.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-30.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-33.
41. "Variana," *II*, 399-407; Ernst Skarstedt, *Svensk-Amerikanska folket i helg och söcken*: (Stockholm: Björck och Börjesson, 1917), p. 303.
42. "Journal," *II*, 4.

#### X. A Decade of Uncertainty

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2. *Tacoma Posten*, Apr. 19, 1907.
3. *Ibid.*
4. "Journal," *I*, 56-70.
5. *Väktaren*, June 26, 1907.
6. Ernst Skarstedt, "Intryck och minnen från en somarresa till östern 1910," *Prärieblomman Kalender för 1911*, pp. 51-55.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-68.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-75.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
15. "Dagbok," Dec. 25, 1910; July 25, Sept. 6, 1911.
16. *Ibid.*, July 3, 1911.
17. *Ibid.*, Aug. 11, 20, 1911.
18. *Ibid.*, Aug. 20, 1911.

19. *Ibid.*, Aug. 21, 1911; *Puget Sound Posten* (Tacoma, Wash.), Aug. 24, 1911.
20. "Dagbok," Feb. 9, 10, 14, 1912.
21. *Ibid.*, Apr. 17, May 22, 1912.
22. *Svenska Pressen* (Omaha, Neb.), July 3, 1917; *Pacific-Tribune* (Seattle), Sept. 11, 1917; *Lindsborgs-Posten*, Apr. 28, 1915.
23. "Dagbok," Nov. 5, 1912.
24. *Ibid.*, Aug. 1, 1912.
25. *Pacific-Tribune*, Sept. 13, 1914.
26. Ernst Skarstedt to Vilhelm Reslow, June 22, 1911 and Apr. 12, 1912.
27. *Lindsborgs-Posten*, Apr. 28, May 5, 1915.
28. "J. E. H.," *Svenska Pressen*, July 3, 17, 1913.
29. "Journal," *I*, 69-78; "Dagbok," June 12, Dec. 16, 1913.
30. "Journal," *I*, 69-78.
31. *Nordstjernan*, June 21, 1906.
32. *Ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1907.
33. *Ibid.*, May 27, 1913; *Vestkusten*, May 29, 1913.
34. *Nordstjernan*, Feb. 21, 1907.
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39. *Vestkusten*, Oct. 8, 1914.
40. Gibbs M. Smith, *Joe Hill* (Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1969), p. 17.
41. Ernst Skarstedt's letter was printed in *Utah Posten* (Salt Lake City), Jan. 5, 1916 and in *Svenska Socialisten*, Feb. 2, 1916. The latter was exceedingly critical of Skarstedt's letter.
42. *Vestkusten*, May 20, 27, 1915. Ernst's letter to Josua Lindahl was written on October 15, 1909, from Columbia Station, Seattle.
43. "Journal," *II*, 93-107; "Dagbok," May 4, July 8, 1915.

#### XI. Sweden Revisited

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  9. "Dagbok," Apr. 4, 1916; *Stockholms-Tidning*, Apr. 6, 1916; Wickman, "Dagboksanteckningar."
  10. Wickman, "Dagboksanteckningar."
  11. "Dagbok," Apr. 4, 1916; Wickman, "Dagboksanteckningar."
  12. "Dagbok," Apr. 20-May 4, 1916 *passim*.
  13. *Ibid.*, June 16-July 1, 1916, *passim*.
  14. The article from *Nya-Wermlands Tidning* (Karlstad), reprinted in *Nordstjernan*, Mar. 14, 1916.
  15. *Smålands Posten*, June 3, 1916.
  16. *Nordstjernan*, Feb. 2, 20, 1917.
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  18. *Ibid.*, Jan. 2 and Feb. 13, 1917.
  19. *Ibid.*, Feb. 13, 16, 1917.
  20. *Ibid.*, Feb. 16, 20, 23, 1917.
  21. *Ibid.*, Feb. 20, 23, 1917.
  22. *Stockholms-Tidning*, July 19, 1916, reprinted from *Nordstjernan*.
  23. *Ibid.*, Feb. 23, 1917.

## XII. Restlessness Abides

1. "Dagbok," Aug. 18-Sept. 6, 1916, *passim*.
2. *Ibid.*, Sept. 6-29, 1916, *passim*.
3. *Ibid.*, Jan. 8, 1917.
4. *Svenska Kuriren*, Jan. 4, 1917; *Nordstjernan*, Jan. 2, 1917.
5. "Dagbok," Jan. 16, 1917.
6. *Ibid.*, Apr. 7, 1917.



7. *Ibid.*, Mar. 13, May 15, 18, 1917.
8. *Ibid.*, May 18-19, June 20, 1917.
9. *Ibid.*, June 28, Aug. 24, Sept. 19, 1917.
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11. Ernst Skarstedt to Vilhelm Reslow, Aug. 2, 1904 and Sept. 17, 1914.
12. *Arvika Nyheter*, Apr. 18, 1916; *Nordstjernen*, Apr. 20, 1917.
13. *Nordstjernen*, Apr. 13, Mar. 6, 1917.
14. "Dagbok," Aug. 29, 1918; *Svea*, Oct. 16, 1918; *Puget Sound Posten*, Aug. 23, 1918.
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16. "Journal," *II*, 5; "Dagbok," Oct. 30-31, 1918.
17. *Aftonblad* (Stockholm), Sept. 15, 1918; *Vestkusten*, Oct. 31, 1918.
18. "Dagbok," Jan. 25, Feb. 3, Mar. 21-23, Aug. 11, 1919.
19. *Ibid.*, June 3, Oct. 21, Nov. 18, 1919. Marcus Skarstedt to Ernst Skarstedt, Dec. 30, 1919; "Journal," *II*, 4-5.
20. "Dagbok," Dec. 24, 1919.
21. *Nordstjernen*, June 13, 1918.
22. *Ibid.*, Dec. 5, 1919.
23. *Vestkusten*, Sept. 30, 1920.
24. *Nordstjernen*, Feb. 13, 1920.
25. "Dagbok," Jan. 2, 1920; Letter of Ernst Skarstedt, Mar. 9, 1920, printed in *Falu-Kuriren*, Apr. 9, 1920.
26. "Dagbok," Jan. 28, 30, 1920.
27. *Ibid.*, Nov. 11, 1919, contains a copy of the letter of Charles K. Johansen to Ernst Skarstedt. Ernst Skarstedt to G. N. Malm, Jan. 4, 1920.
28. "Dagbok," May 6, 31, and June 13, 1920.
29. *Ibid.*, Mar. 23, 1920, Ernst's letter to Nils Gillgren is copied in the diary.

### XIII. The New York Years

1. "Journal," *II*, 250-73.
2. *Ibid.*, 258-62.
3. "Dagbok," Oct. 11, 1922.
4. *Ibid.*, Oct. 14, 1921; Nov. 20, 1925; Jan. 9, 11, 1921; Apr. 18, 1925; Apr. 4, 1921.

5. "Journal," *I*, 86-120, 159-80; *III*, 151-60; "Dagbok," Dec. 31, 1923.
6. "Dagbok," May 17, 1924 and Jan. 2, 1926.
7. *Canada Posten*, Apr. 20, 1920.
8. *Vestkusten*, July 10, 1920.
9. *Farm and Home*, Sept., 1920.
10. *Nordstjernen*, Aug. 8, 1924.
11. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1922.
12. *Ibid.*, Aug. 13, 1923.
13. *Ibid.*, Apr. 3, 1925.
14. *Ibid.*, Mar. 12, 1920 and Mar. 17, 1922.
15. *Ibid.*, Apr. 9, 1920.
16. *Ibid.*, May 29, 1925.
17. *Ibid.*, June 8, 1923.
18. "Dagbok," June 4, July 25, 1921, July 31, 1922.
19. *Ibid.*, Apr. 21, 1921; July 20, 1922; Ernst Skarstedt to Reslow, Nov. 25, 1922.
20. Ernst Skarstedt to Reslow, Nov. 25, 1922.
21. *Svenska Amerikanska Posten* (Minneapolis), Mar. 27, 1929, contains this letter.
22. "Dagbok," Dec. 11, 1925; Ernst Skarstedt to Reslow, Apr. 15, 1926.
23. Copies of the letters are in the "Dagbok," July 6, 1925; Feb. 17, 1926.
24. "Dagbok," May 6, 1926.
25. *Ibid.*, May 10, 1926; *Svenska Amerikanska Posten*, May 16, 1928.
26. "Dagbok," May 13, 21-22, 1926.
27. *Ibid.*, May 29, June 11, June 21, 1926; Ernst Skarstedt to Reslow, Aug. 12, 1926.

#### XIV. The Shadows Lengthen

1. "Dagbok," Sept. 23 and 30, Nov. 12, 1926.
2. *Ibid.*, Aug. 12, Sept. 26, Oct. 13, Nov. 12, 1926.
3. *Ibid.*, Sept. 18-19, Oct. 5, 1926.
4. M. Ld., *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, May 14, 1929.
5. Ernst Skarstedt to Vilhelm Reslow, Apr. 28, 1927.
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7. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
8. "Dagbok," June 24-26, Jan. 14, 27, 28, 1927.
9. *Ibid.*, Jan. 28, Feb. 11, 1928.
10. *Ibid.*, Mar. 27, 1928.
11. *Ibid.*, June 4, 22, 25-28, July 18-21, 1928.
12. *Ibid.*, Aug. 2-15, 1928, *passim*.
13. *Ibid.*, Aug. 21, Sept. 29, 1928.
14. *Ibid.*, Nov. 6, 13, 1928.
15. *Ibid.*, Nov. 23, Dec. 15, 18, 1928.
16. *Svenska Amerikanska Posten*, Apr. 17, 1929.
17. *Missionären* (Chicago), Apr. 2, 1929.
18. *Svenska Amerikanska Posten*, Apr. 17, 1929.
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#### XV. The Summing Up

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2. Ernst Skarstedt to Vilhelm Reslow, Mar. 31, 1911; Interview with Martha Skarstedt Edwards, Oct. 19, 1971.
3. The principal source for information about the family relationships was an interview with Martha Skarstedt Edwards, Oct. 19, 1971.
4. Ernst Skarstedt, *Vagabond och redaktör*, pp. 9-10.
5. *Ibid.*
6. "Journal," II, 11-119; 133-49; 153-79; 191-274; "Journal," I, 1-120; 159-80, and "Journal," III, 151-63; 1-11; "Journal," I, 181-257.
7. *Nordstjernen*, Mar. 26, 1918.
8. Ernst Skarstedt, *Amerikanska typer och karaktärer*, p. 13.
9. *Vestkusten*, Apr. 17, 1919.
10. *Ibid.*, July 25, 1918.
11. Ernst Skarstedt, "Kristendomens svaga punkter," *Forskaren* (Minneapolis), Jan., 1910, pp. 17-18, 23.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
13. *Svenska Dagbladet*, reprinted in *Svenska Folkets Tidning* (Minneapolis and St. Paul), Aug. 8, 1898.

14. *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, Mar. 14, 1898.
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16. *Stockholms-Tidning*, May 24, 1914.
17. *Svenska Tribunen Nyheter*, Mar. 17, 1914; *Svea*, Mar. 25, 1914.
18. *Svenska Dagbladet* (Stockholm), Mar. 23, 1916.
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23. *Svenska Amerikanaren*, Feb. 10, 1912.
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25. Ernst Skarstedt, *Svensk-Amerikanska folket*, pp. 6, 13.
26. *Vestkusten*, Mar. 21, 1929.
27. *Svenska Amerikanaren*, Mar. 21, 1929.
28. Ernst Skarstedt, *Våra pennfäktare*, p. 155.
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30. Ernst Skarstedt, *Amerikanska typer och karaktärer*, p. 11. The quotation from *Walden* is in the "Conclusion."

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